

**CSNY** GO BACK TO  
DÉJÀ VU



**ST. VINCENT**  
"I WAS FERAL"



**M**

*Music Magazine*

*Meet the  
New Guvnor!*

**PAUL  
WELLER**

**EDITS MOJO**

**THE JAM!**  
**THE STYLE  
COUNCIL!**  
**A WELLER  
BONANZA!**

**165**  
REVIEWS  
THE WHO, THE FALL  
SPIRITUALIZED  
TONY JOE WHITE  
& MORE

**PAUL  
McCARTNEY**  
"COME ON, MAN, WE  
WERE HIPPIES!"

**FUNKADELIC**  
MAGGOT BRAIN AT 50

**MY BLOODY  
VALENTINE**  
"I'M NOT FINISHED  
WITH LOVELESS"

**THE CORAL**  
SEASIDE PSYCH  
SURVIVORS!

**+**  
**FAREWELL**  
**BUNNY WAILER**

# THE WHO SELL OUT

SUPER DELUXE EDITION



## THE CLASSIC GROUNDBREAKING ALBUM RE-IMAGINED

- 112 Tracks – 47 Unreleased including 14 unheard Pete Townshend demos
  - 80-Page Book with new liner notes by Pete Townshend
- 5 CDs and 2 x 7" Vinyl Singles • Rare Inserts, Memorabilia and 2 x Posters

### Also available

- 2-CD Deluxe Edition • 2-LP Stereo Edition • 2-LP Mono Edition on Colour Vinyl • Stream • Download

OUT FRIDAY 23rd APRIL



# CONTENTS

LONDON ♦ MEMPHIS ♦ AGADEZ

JUNE 2021

Issue 331



“We gonna be the blackest, we gonna be the funkiest, we gonna be the dirtiest.”

**GEORGE CLINTON'S  
FUNKADELIC  
MANIFESTO, P52**

## FEATURES

**28 ST. VINCENT** As a new album addresses her father's incarceration, art-rock changeling Annie Clark talks us through her multiple transformations.

**34 MDOU MOCTAR** From the interior of Niger comes the man taking Saharan blues to the next level. “Hendrix made me sick!” he tells David Hutcheon.

## PAUL WELLER PRESENTS

**40 CSNY** Weller covered their Ohio. Now rock's second-biggest quartet reboot *Déjà Vu* with revealing bonus tracks and poignant interviews with MOJO.

**46 THE CORAL** Merseyside's psychedelic survivors, the Weller faves came close to catastrophe before returning with *Coral Island*, their mystic masterpiece.

**52 FUNKADELIC** Fifty years since its birth, MOJO disinters *Maggot Brain* – the fusion of George Clinton's psych-funk vision and Eddie Hazel's stoned soul guitar.

**58 JAM SLEEVES** Bill Smith designed covers for five Jam albums and 17 singles (plus a couple for Sige Sige Sputnik). As he reveals, some ingenuity was required.

**60 MY BLOODY VALENTINE** Kevin Shields on his latest restoration of *Loveless*, what Alan McGee did to his tremolo arm, and new music that *might even come out!*

**66 PAUL WELLER** The latest (but only fifth ever) MOJO Guest Editor gets back to the day job. Cue: *Fat Pop (Volume 1)*, his personal antidote to the pandemic.

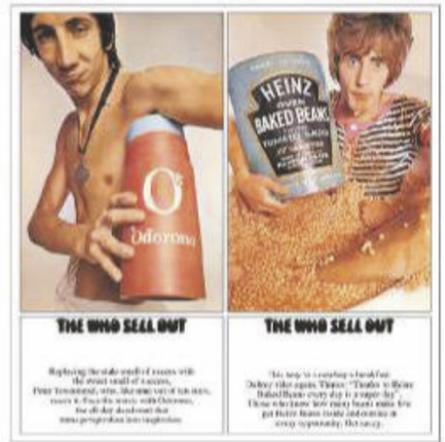
**72 PAUL McCARTNEY** *Ram* was Macca's first album as an official ex-Beatle. Paul and pals recall its gestation and genius. Plus: Weller on his all-time pop hero.



John and Yoko, Lennon's Plastic Ono adventure, File Under, p96.



Blackheart man bows out: Bunny Wailer, Real Gone, p106.



It came from the swamp: Tony Joe White, Lead Album, p80.

# MOJO

## REGULARS

- 9 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE** Sharon Van Etten, Paul Stanley and Black Midi welcome you. But who's the JS Bach ultra?
- 106 REAL GONE** Bunny Wailer, Chris Barber, Malcolm Cecil, Sally Grossman, Dan Sartain and more, hail and farewell.
- 112 ASK MOJO** Who debuted with live LPs? A doctor writes.
- 114 HELLO GOODBYE** It began when Weller pulled the plug on The Jam. And the end wasn't what it seemed. Mick Talbot remembers The Style Council.

## WHAT GOES ON!

- 12 JEFF BUCKLEY** Everybody Here Wants You, the official biopic of the late mega talent, is finally in motion, with Reeve Carney playing the lead. Director Orian Williams brings exclusive news, insight and images.
- 16 MANIC STREET PREACHERS** Cast adrift by Covid, the Manics were in stop-start mode when secret ways into their next album presented themselves. James Dean Bradfield and Nicky Wire explain the allure of the high 1980s.
- 18 JAYNE COUNTY** The original transgender rock'n'roller is back with an update of her memoir – Bowie, Warhol and Jools Holland all have walk-on parts.
- 20 PEGGY SEEGER** A mainstay of transatlantic folk since the '50s is in Confidential mood, and talks brother Pete, late hubby Ewan MacColl and Shirley Collins.
- 21 PAUL McCARTNEY** He's handed over *McCartney III* to remixers like Beck, St. Vincent and Damon Albarn. Khruangbin and Idris Elba tell all about their contributions.

## MOJO FILTER

- 80 NEW ALBUMS** Tony Joe White, rises from the everglades. Plus many more...
- 92 REISSUES** Spiritualized, John Lennon, Nightingales, The Who and many more...
- 103 SCREEN** Guy Clark remembered, plus Billie Holiday, Poly Styrene and Creation itself!
- 105 BOOKS** Three Falls, two Bob Dylans, one Rural Blues. And more...

## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...



### Ted Kessler

A childhood member of The Jam's official fanclub, Ted's first interaction with Paul Weller was – disappointingly – when Weller offered to fight him after a lukewarm *Stanley Road* review. Time heals. They've subsequently met for NME and Q, where Kessler was editor until 2020. This new interview marks Ted's MOJO debut.



### Nicole Nodland

Nicole started her career as the first in-house photographer to Prince at Paisley Park, touring with the band and documenting his life for many years. Since then she has photographed icons such as Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles and George Clinton, Lana Del Rey, Sam Smith, Dua Lipa and Paul Weller. [www.nicolenodland.com](http://www.nicolenodland.com)



### David Hutcheon

Marking his silver jubilee as MOJO's nomadic world music correspondent, David is in Niger this month with Tamashek shredder and Prince superfan Mdou Moctar (see p34). Antarctica is the only continent he hasn't reported from, so if you hear of anything good in the Grytviken gig guide, drop him a line.

Arik Roper, Getty, Nicole Nodland



WITH: DAVE BRONZE • NEIL FINN • NOEL GALLAGHER • BILLY GIBBONS  
DAVID GILMOUR • KIRK HAMMETT • JONNY LANG • ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW  
JOHN MAYALL • CHRISTINE MCVIE • RICKY PETERSON • JEREMY SPENCER  
ZAK STARKEY • PETE TOWNSHEND • STEVEN TYLER • RICK VITO • BILL WYMAN

**AN ALL-STAR CAST, ONE-OF-A-KIND CONCERT HONOURING  
THE EARLY YEARS OF FLEETWOOD MAC AND ITS FOUNDER PETER GREEN,  
HELD AT THE LONDON PALLADIUM ON 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020**

**• 4LP + 2CD + BLU-RAY DELUXE BOX SET  
• 4LP GATEFOLD • 2CD • 2CD + BLU-RAY MEDIABOOK**

**OUT 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL**

**BMG**

[WWW.MICKFLEETWOODANDFRIENDS.COM](http://WWW.MICKFLEETWOODANDFRIENDS.COM)

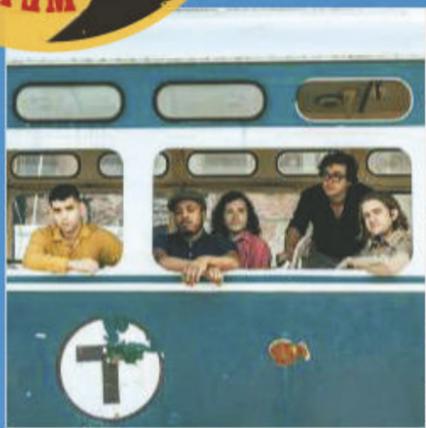
Paul Weller presents

MOJO

# INTO TOMORROW

15 tracks hand-picked by Weller

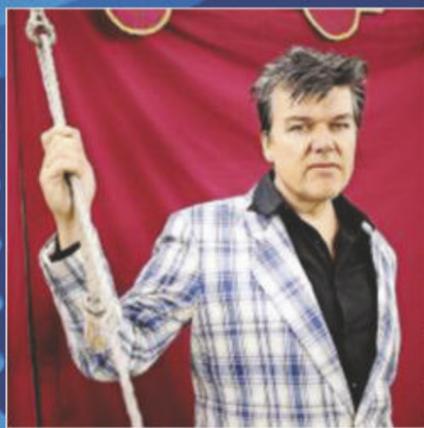
INCLUDING BLACK PUMAS, P.P. ARNOLD, RICHARD HAWLEY, DURAND JONES & THE INDICATIONS + A PAUL WELLER RARITY!



## 1 DURAND JONES & THE INDICATIONS MORNING IN AMERICA

From Bloomington, Indiana, The Indications have spent the past few years updating the sentiments and sounds of early '70s protest soul, as heard on this 2019 state-of-the-nation lament, with Philly strings, Jones's elegant vocals and Blake Rhein's Ernie Isley-style guitar.

Written by Aaron Gabriel Grazer, Blake Jordan Rhein, Kyle Duane Houpt, & Justin Thomas. ©&©2019 Dead Oceans Courtesy of Dead Oceans. Published by Songs In Numerical Order (BMI) and Copyright Control.



## 2 THE BLOW MONKEYS TIME STORM

Blow Monkeys frontman Dr Robert has been tight with Weller since the 1980s, from time spent together in the Red Wedge movement and thanks to a musical vision that often intersected. Indeed, Dr Robert guested on *Into Tomorrow*, Weller's solo debut single that named this comp. The band reformed in 2008: *Time Storm* is a soulful 2020 single.

Written by Robert Howard. Published by BMG Rights MGMT LTD UK. From the forthcoming *Journey To You* on Blow Monkey Music Label ([www.theblowmonkeys.com](http://www.theblowmonkeys.com)).



## 3 STONE FOUNDATION (FEAT. LAVILLE) THE LIGHT IN US

A sharp, long-simmering modern soul band from Warwickshire, it's easy to see how Stone Foundation fell into Weller's orbit. *The Light In Us* comes from their sixth album, *Is Love Enough*, recorded at Weller's studio and featuring contributions from Style Councillors Mick Talbot and Steve White, Weller himself, Durand Jones and, here, upcoming Acid Jazz vocalist Laville.

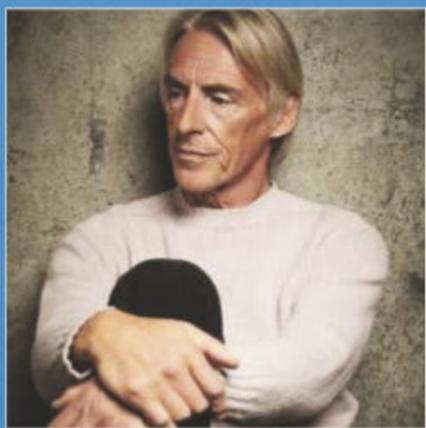
Written by Jones and Sheasby. Published by Wipe Out Music ©&©2020 100% Records.



## 4 BLACK PUMAS COLORS

By some distance the most familiar song on *Into Tomorrow*, *Colors* has become the righteous calling card of Austin, Texas' Black Pumas. The duo of Eric Burton and Adrian Quesada recently performed the song at Joe Biden's inauguration event and the 2021 Grammys, where it was nominated for Record Of The Year and Best American Roots Performance.

Written by Eric Burton, Adrian Quesada. Published by Black Pumas LLC, ©&©2019 ATO Records, under exclusive licence to [PIAS]. From *Black Pumas* (ATO Records): <https://atorecords.com/>



## 9 PAUL WELLER IN ANOTHER ROOM

The editor's own contribution now, a 2019 rarity previously only released as a 7-inch on the afore-said Ghost Box. *In Another Room* is closer to *musique concrète* than rock'n'roll, a pastoral sound collage to match Weller's definition of the label sound as "both familiar and half remembered and very British but also something very strange."

Written by Paul Weller. Published by Universal Music Publishing, ©Solid Bond Productions Ltd. under exclusive licence to Ghost Box Records 2019, ©Ghost Box Records 2019. From the EP *In Another Room* (Ghost Box records) [www.ghostbox.co.uk](http://www.ghostbox.co.uk)



## 10 P.P. ARNOLD WHEN I WAS PART OF YOUR PICTURE

The original Queen Of The Mods, associate of the Stones, Small Faces, Ike & Tina Turner and others, sang backing vocals on Weller's 2017 album, *A Kind Revolution*, having worked with Weller guitarist Steve Cradock since the '90s. Her splendid comeback set finally saw the light of day in 2019; this chamber pop marvel from it was written by Weller.

Written by Paul Weller. Published by Universal Music Publishing, ©&©2019 Edel Germany GmbH. earMUSIC is a project of Edel. From *The New Adventures Of... P.P. Arnold*. (earMusic).



## 11 RICHARD HAWLEY FURTHER

Richard Hawley's been involved with Weller on tracks in the past, remixing *Andromeda* in 2009 and *The Soul Searchers* in 2018. Weller's ambition to co-write with the Sheffield troubadour and virtuoso guitarist has yet, however, to be publicly realised; an ambition that makes even more sense when you hear a song so impeccably crafted, so classically constructed, as *Further*, the title track of Hawley's eighth and most recent solo album.

Written by R. Hawley. Published by BMG Music ©&©BMG Records.



## 12 DECLAN O'ROURKE THIS THING THAT WE SHARE

Weller first encountered the Irish singer-songwriter in the early 2000s, when both were signed to V2. An enduring friendship resulted in Weller producing O'Rourke's new LP, *Arrivals*, and adding jazz piano here. "Declan's a master storyteller. He'll put you in that place. You'll see the picture, feel the wind, smell the sea breeze. You'll be totally involved," Weller tells us on page 24.

Written by Declan O'Rourke. Published by Copyright Control Under exclusive licence to Warner Music UK Limited, ©2021 Maiesta Music Ltd IEF02000010 Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd

Nicole Nodland (2), Getty, Lawrence Watson, Alex Kozobolis, Lois Gray, Chris Saunders, Jody Domingue, Chloe Muldowney

**I**T'S A TRICKY JOB BEING GUEST EDITOR OF MOJO, AS David Bowie, Tom Waits, Noel Gallagher and Keith Richards have all found out over the years. The role requires great stature, an awe-inspiring body of work, and a serious appetite for the music of others – the latter not always a given among rock legends.

Paul Weller, though, is an impeccably qualified candidate. Over the past few years especially, his own dynamic productivity has been matched by an insatiable drive to discover new sounds. "Music has been my most reliable friend – and I am blessed with many great friends," he tells us this month. "Music's a spiritual force, it covers so much ground: as a way of informing us, making us question things. It's been my whole life. Everything has been governed by it.

"Music's forever giving," he continues, and here's what he's given us for this very special issue: *Into Tomorrow*, a 15-track mix of tunes hand-picked from the Weller record box. Fresh revelations, old friends, fellow travellers and a guest turn or two from the Editor himself. Take it away, boss...



**5 GABRIELS  
LOVE AND HATE IN  
A DIFFERENT TIME**

A significant find by our compiler, Gabriels being an LA trio featuring singer Jacob Lusk with producers Ari Balouzian and Ryan Hope. On this 2020 single, Lusk's falsetto echoes Curtis Mayfield's, while the producers retool classic soul tropes marking Gabriels as spirits akin to another recent Weller favourite, Sault.

Written by Jacob Lusk, Ryan Hope, Ari Balouzian. Published by Copyright Control. From *Love And Hate in a Different Time* (04/12/20 Gabriels); <http://appraiser.audio>



**6 MARVIN POWELL  
WIND BEFORE THE TRAIN**

As he outlines on page 50, Paul Weller has long been a fan of The Coral, James Skelly's Skeleton Key label, and the eccentric, artful scene of musicians on the Wirral. Weller has special praise for singer-songwriter Marvin Powell, and this finger-picked, Nick Drake-like gem: "It's like something that could have been on the old pink Island label," he says.

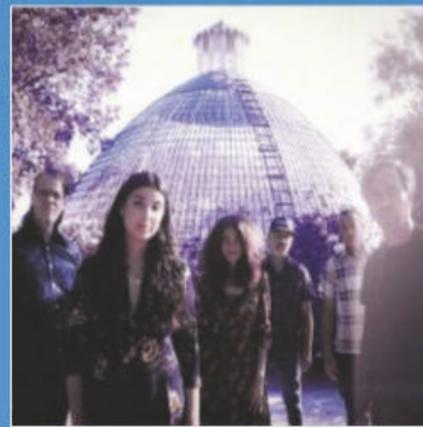
Written by Marvin Powell. Published by Skeleton Key Songs / Sentric Music LTD. ©&©Skeleton Key Records LTD. 2019. From *Dust Of The Day*.



**7 THIRD EAR BAND  
OVERTURE: MACBETH**

Weller focused on new music in compiling *Into Tomorrow*, but could not resist adding this uncanny 1972 jam to the mix. "I love this, it's really special," he tells us. "It's like, half-way between early electronic music and madrigals!" For the full story of the Third Ear Band's Macbeth soundtrack, turn to page 102.

Written by Sweeney, Minns, Buckmaster, Bridges. Publisher – EMI Music Publishing Ltd ISRC Code – GBBLY1900076 ©1972 Cherry Red Records Ltd. From *Music From Macbeth*. Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.



**8 BEAUTIFY JUNKYARDS  
COSMORAMA**

Another key find: Weller's love of the Ghost Box label inspired him to make it the subject of this month's How To Buy on page 100. But if the label is best known for creepy, avant-garde rethinks of '70s England, Lisbon's Beautify Junkyards are a striking departure. "They're Portuguese, psychedelic. Good gear," says Weller.

Written by Espvall, Kyron, Miranda, Moreira, Sergue, Watts. Published by Belbury Music, ©&©Ghost Box Records 2020. From *Cosmorama* (Ghost Box Records) [www.ghostbox.co.uk](http://www.ghostbox.co.uk)



**13 ERLAND COOPER  
CREELS**

Erland Cooper has strong ties with Weller, as co-writer of three tracks on *True Meanings* – and as our feature on page 66 reveals, their creative partnership continued through lockdown. Having risen via folk rockers Erland And The Carnival and The Magnetic North (with PW arranger Hannah Peel), and often contributing lyrics for Weller, *Creels* showcases Cooper's skills as a post-classical composer, drawing on the Orkneys folklore, where he grew up.

Written and recorded by Erland Cooper. ©&©Phases, 2019. From *Sule Skerry*.



**14 TEENAGE WAITRESS  
YOU AIN'T GOT IT BAD**

Not to be mistaken for Bauhaus guitarist Daniel Ash, Teenage Waitress is the bedroom synthpop project of one Daniel J Ash, from Southampton. Ash's Weller love isn't immediately apparent on the DIY sweetness of *You Ain't Got It Bad*, but there is another solid bond: the song, and its parent album *Love & Chemicals*, was released last year on Colorama, a label run by Weller's longtime bassist, Andy Crofts.

Written by Daniel J. Ash, Michael Bissett. Unpublished. From *Love & Chemicals* (Colorama Records); <https://www.coloramarecords.com>



**15 THE STROPPIES  
CELLOPHANE CAR**

Childish Gambino, Esther Phillips, The Fatback Band, Lee Morgan, The Headhunters... and The Stroppies? Weller included this low-profile Melbourne band's *Cellophane Car* in a star-studded playlist for us (see page 69). A final revelation for *Into Tomorrow*: an endearingly unfussy jangle-pop throbber, which more or less resembles the early Go-Betweens bashing through Roadrunner. Find it on the band's groovy 2019 album, *Whoosh*.

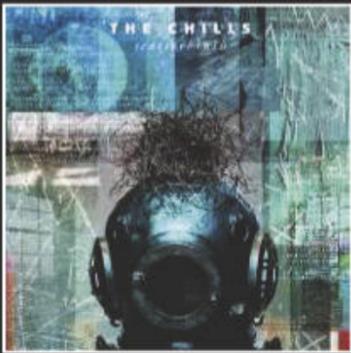
Written by Serfaty, Lord, Hewitt, Heane. Copyright Control 2019. From *Whoosh* (Tough Love)

**"I'VE BEEN GETTING MOJO SINCE IT STARTED..."**

**PAUL WELLER,  
MOJO EDITOR.**

**INTERVIEW:  
PAGE 66**

# CARGO COLLECTIVE



## THE CHILLS

### SCATTERBRAIN

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

A landmark album from one of the great modern song writers, it's pure pop music for the new normal with an incisive turn of phrase. Limited edition 'Deep Sea' marble LP with artwork by Trees' David Costa.

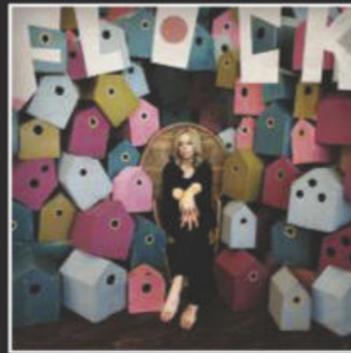


## GOSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR

### G\_D'S PEE AT STATE'S END

CONSTELLATION LP / CD

GYBE returns with a soundtrack for our times: two riveting side-lengths of noise-drenched post-rock spittle and grit, two shorter elegiac companion pieces. Deluxe vinyl is 180gLP + 10" in thermograph gatefold.



## JANE WEAVER

### FLOCK

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

Available on ltd cream LP, light rose LP and CD. "Flock" might prove to be the defining album in her career" Uncut "Weaver's version of pop is distinctly cosmic and deliciously skewed." The Guardian.

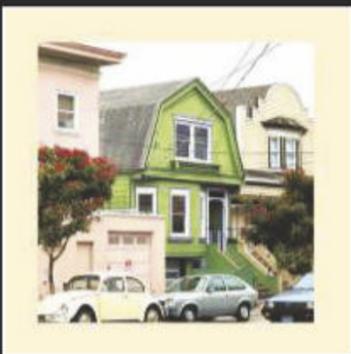


## WILLIAM DOYLE

### GREAT SPANS OF MUDDY TIME

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Born from accident but driven forward by instinct, Doyle showcases a unique exploration of pop, art-rock, ambient & idiosyncratic compositions, married with a voice that deftly glides from tender restraint to soaring peaks.

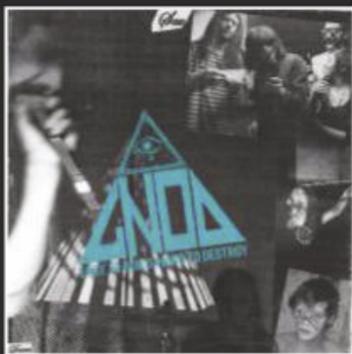


## THE REDS, PINKS AND PURPLES

### UNCOMMON WEATHER

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Features pinnacle versions of songs Glenn Donaldson has honed since the beginning of the project. He imagines his listeners are just like himself: fascinated & addicted to the spiritual power of uncomplicated pop classics.

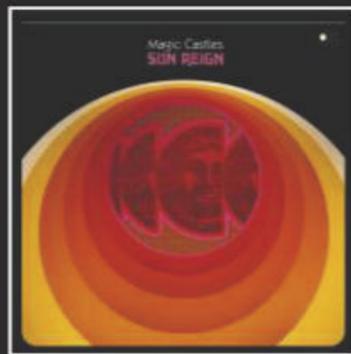


## GNOD

### EASY TO BUILD, HARD TO DESTROY

ROCKET RECORDINGS 2LP / CD

Compilation of obscure material from the raw intense heady early days. Rapture through noise and repetition reaching beyond the boundaries, rock orthodoxy or genre constriction.



## MAGIC CASTLES

### SUN REIGN

'A' RECORDINGS LP / CD

Available on Gold 180 gram vinyl Minneapolis psych-rockers Magic Castles are back with a new LP, "Sun Reign", the band's fourth release on Anton Newcombe's 'A' Recordings Ltd label.

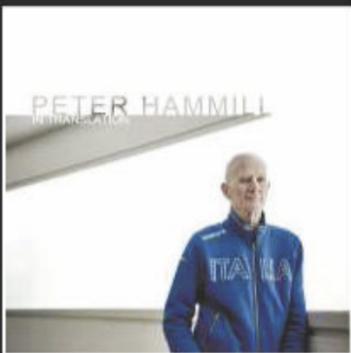


## WHITE FLOWERS

### DAY BY DAY

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Day By Day is the dark-hued dream pop debut from Preston duo, White Flowers, recorded in an abandoned textile mill and produced with Doves' Gez Williams.



## PETER HAMMILL

### IN TRANSLATION

FIE RECORDS CD

From Tango to American Songbook, Italian Pop to Classical, Peter's first ever album of cover versions, most of which he also translated. Very different but very much a PH disc.



## DJ BLACK LOW

### UWAMI

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA LP / CD

DJ Black Low is a young producer who makes a jarringly complex and original style of amapiano, the newish form of South African electronic music.



## MCKINLEY DIXON

### FOR MY MAMA AND ANYONE WHO LOOK LIKE HER

SPACEBOMB LP / CD

"McKinley Dixon works through inner demons and tries to make sense of mortality for Black peoples via a hybrid of rap and jazz, pulling in strings, horns, and angelic vocalists."



## DAWN RICHARD

### SECOND LINE

MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

"Dawn Richard has a sumptuous rasp of a voice and brazenly left-field musical instincts." Pitchfork.

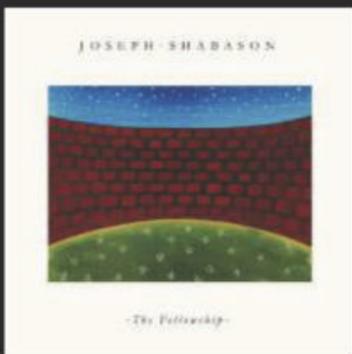


## REIGNING SOUND

### A LITTLE MORE TIME WITH REIGNING SOUND

MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

Featuring the original Memphis lineup, Greg Cartwright's poetic, moody ballads and upbeat, guitar riff-driven rock 'n' roll songs touch on each spectrum of human emotion.



## JOSEPH SHABASON

### THE FELLOWSHIP

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Joseph Shabason blends spacious jazz with fourth-world tonality, creating an auditory map of his dual-faith Islamic and Jewish upbringing. Uncut says his work is "ravishing." The Guardian calls it "wonderful."



## ELEPHANT MICAH

### VAGUE TIDINGS

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

Inspired by a DIY tour of Alaska, Vague Tidings evokes images of a frontier lust run amok. Uncut compares him to Will Oldham and Bon Iver, while Mojo calls his songs "lovely."



## KISHI BASHI

### EMIGRANT EP

JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS LP

Kishi Bashi travelled frequently to Montana for his album "Omoiyari" which gave him the freedom to gravitate towards roots music now documented on Emigrant EP.

AN AMALGAMATION OF RECORD SHOPS AND LABELS DEDICATED TO BRINGING YOU NEW MUSIC

IRELAND: DUBLIN - SPINDIZZY / KILKENNY - ROLLER COASTER RECORDS NORTHERN IRELAND: SABLE STARR RECORDS SCOTLAND: DUNDEE - ASSAI / EDINBURGH - ASSAI / GLASGOW - LOVE MUSIC / GLASGOW - MONORAIL / WALES: ABERYSTWYTH - ANDY'S RECORDS / CARDIFF - SPILLERS / NEW INN - MARBLE VINYL RECORDS / NEWPORT - DIVERSE / SWANSEA - DERRICKS NORTH - WEST: BARROW-IN-FURNESS - TNT RECORDS / LIVERPOOL - 81 RENSHAW LTD / LIVERPOOL - PROBE / MANCHESTER - PICCADILLY RECORDS / PRESTON - ACTION RECORDS NORTH-EAST: BINGLEY - FIVE RISE RECORDS / HARROGATE - P & C MUSIC / HEADINGLEY - VINYL WHISTLE / HUDDERSFIELD - VINYL TAP / LEEDS - CRASH / LEEDS - JUMBO RECORDS / NEWCASTLE - J G WINDOWS / NEWCASTLE - BEATDOWN / NEWCASTLE - BEYOND VINYL / NEWCASTLE - REFLEX / SCARBOROUGH - RECORD REVIVALS / SHEFFIELD - BEAR TREE / SHEFFIELD - RECORD COLLECTOR / SHEFFIELD - SPINNING DISCS / STOCKTON ON TEES - SOUND IT OUT / WAKEFIELD - WAH WAH RECORDS MIDLANDS: BEDFORD - SLIDE RECORDS / CAMBRIDGE - LOST IN VINYL / CAMBRIDGE - RELEVANT / COVENTRY - JUST DROPPED IN / DERBY - REVEAL RECORDS / LEAMINGTON SPA - HEAD / LEAMINGTON SPA - SEISMIC RECORDS / LEIGHTON BUZZARD - BLACK CIRCLE RECORDS / LETCHWORTH - DAVID'S MUSIC / LOUTH - OFF THE BEATEN TRACK / NOTTINGHAM - ROUGH TRADE / OXFORD - TRUCK STORE / STOKE ON TRENT - MUSIC MANIA / STOKE ON TRENT - STRAND RECORDS / WITNEY - RAPTURE SOUTH: BEXHILL ON SEA - MUSIC'S NOT DEAD / BLANDFORD FORUM - REVOLUTION ROCKS / BOURNEMOUTH - AVID RECORDS / BRIGHTON - RESIDENT / BURY ST. EDMUNDS - VINYL HUNTER / GODALMING - RECORD CORNER/ HASTINGS - CLOTH AND WAX / LEIGH-ON-SEA - FIVES / LONDON - BANQUET GRAVITY / LONDON - CASBAH / LONDON - FLASHBACK / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE EAST / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE TALBOT RD / LONDON - SISTER RAY / LUTON - VINYL REVELATIONS / ROMSEY - HUNDRED / SOUTHSEA - PIE & VINYL / SOUTHEAST ON SEA - SOUTH RECORDS / ST ALBANS - EMPIRE RECORDS / STANMORE - HORIZONS MUSIC / WATFORD - LP CAFE / WIMBORNE - SQUARE RECORDS / WHITSTABLE - GATEFIELD SOUNDS / WINCHESTER - ELEPHANT RECORDS SOUTH WEST: BRISTOL - RADIO ON / BRISTOL - ROUGH TRADE / CHELTENHAM - BADLANDS / FALMOUTH - JAM / FROME - RAVES FROM THE GRAVE / MARLBOROUGH - SOUND KNOWLEDGE / TOTNES - DRIFT / SWANSEA - TANGLED PARROT MAILORDER AND INTERNET ONLY STORES: BLEEP.COM / BOOMKAT.COM / JUNORECORDS / NORMANRECORDS.COM / PEBBLERRECORDS.CO.UK / RECORDSTORE.CO.UK

17 HEATHMAN'S ROAD, LONDON SW6 4TJ - CARGORECORDS.CO.UK - INFO@CARGORECORDS.CO.UK



# Sharon Van Etten

STAGE AND SCREEN STAR

**What music are you currently grooving to?**

**Adriana McCassim's** debut EP *Quiet Sides*. [She] reminds me of my younger self. She worked as an intern at a management company, learned how to record herself and others, as well as thriving on constant motion, inspired by heartbreak, yet feeling rooted in self-awareness and contemplation.

**What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?**

**Fleetwood Mac's** *Tusk*. Makes me miss playing with my band and embracing the flaws of live feels.

**What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?**

**Elastica's** first album. I was 14. I bought this at a Sam Goody at the mall, on cassette, the summer we were driving cross-country from New Jersey to drop my brother off at college in Arizona. I'm one of five kids and my Walkman was *everything* to me. Still love this record.

**Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?**

**Joan Jett**. I've always had this inner rocker alter ego that sneaks out. I still try and conjure her attitude in my vocal performances, but no one could ever replicate what she has done.

**What do you sing in the shower?**

**Unchained Melody**. It became a melody to my child early on. [It] may be one of the best melodies ever.

**What is your favourite Saturday night record?**

**Portishead's** *Dummy*. I always think of high school when I hear this album. Driving in my friend Rob's Jeep Wrangler, with the windows down, to the beach and being silly teenagers.

**And your Sunday morning record?**

**Lucinda Williams' *World Without Tears***. One of the best singers of our time. She sets a tone, takes you places.

*epic Ten is out digitally on April 16. Physical release is June 11 on Ba Da Bing.*

# ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

## Geordie Greep

BLACK MIDI  
OVERDRIVER

**What music are you currently grooving to?**

*Circense* by **Egberto Gismonti**. The brilliant, brilliant, brilliant Brazilian multi-instrumentalist gives you eight dynamite tunes. Despite being almost entirely instrumental, this is a truly absorbing, accessible listen, with even its occasional detours into schmaltz saved by an omnipresent vivacity.

**What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?**

*What's Going On* by **Marvin Gaye**. Cliché answer but there is no 36 minutes of recorded music I find more enjoyable.

**What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?**

Take Me Out by **Franz Ferdinand**.



Anthrox Studios, Stephanie Nicole Smith

Great song, very well put together.

**Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?**

An infinite amount of wonderful artists for an infinite amount of ridiculous fantasies. My answer today would be a no-name musician in one of **J.S. Bach's** ensembles. There would be no pressure to do anything spectacular, and no chance for your inadequacy to desecrate the course of music, but you would have a first-hand look at the supreme genius of the art-form and be the only person of the last 275 years to hear his work as it was truly intended. This is not even mentioning the possibility of hearing him improvise on the pipe organ.

**What do you sing in the shower?**

You can't sing in the shower – it disrupts whatever hypothetical scenario, seminar, argument, treaty, etc is being conducted.

**What is your favourite Saturday night record?**

*Hats* by **The Blue Nile**. A terrific, passionate album featuring some of the best vocal performances I can remember. The final track exemplifies this time of the week.

**And your Sunday morning record?**

*New York Tendaberry* by **Laura Nyro**. Truly unique songs with a linear, theatrical approach. One of the most striking things about it is a sparseness and sense of dynamics... forget about those hacks from New York, this is the true minimalist music!

*black midi's Cavalcade is released on May 28 on Rough Trade.*

## Paul Stanley

STARCHILD, SOUL MAN

**What music are you currently grooving to?**

I try for some diversity, and the idea of just living in the past isn't that interesting. I certainly find some of **Arianna Grande's** music really good. **Allen Stone**, an R&B singer, writes some terrific material, **Post Malone...** and **Billie Eilish** is terrific.

**What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?**

Wow, wow. So so hard. There are so many important albums for me, but I might just grab **Sam Cooke *Live At The Harlem Square***. He is the foundation of so much, so important in the scheme of things.

**What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?**

It dates me but it was a 78rpm record. I was probably five years old, and my grandmother walked me miles over a bridge near our home in Manhattan to this little record store, and I bought, on Cadence Records, **The Everly Brothers' *Dream***. Then, you weren't just transported by the music, it was the cover and liner-notes as well, like a full meal. I bought the first **King Crimson**



record after looking at the cover – "I don't know what the hell this is, but I have to have it!"

**Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?**

My gosh! So many. It could be **Jimmy Page, Jackie Wilson, Rod Stewart, Robert Plant, Steve Marriott, David Ruffin, Pavarotti...**

**What do you sing in the shower?**

I don't often... and I don't shower on-stage.

**What is your favourite Saturday night record?**

Depends on what's going on that night. It might be **The Temptations' *Just My Imagination***; **Hendrix, *All Along The Watchtower***; **Otis, *Try A Little Tenderness***; **Zeppelin, *Ramble On*...**

**And your Sunday morning record?**

I have a compilation of Motown, Philly soul, Chicago soul. I'd have a hearty breakfast with the family and go ride my bike and listen.

*Now And Then by Paul Stanley's Soul Station is out now on UMC.*

"I don't know what the hell this is, but I have to have it."

PAUL STANLEY

Academic House,  
24-28 Oval Road  
London NW1 7DT  
Tel: 020 7437 9011

Reader queries: [mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk)

Subscriber queries: [bauer@subscription.co.uk](mailto:bauer@subscription.co.uk)

General e-mail: [mojo@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mojo@bauermedia.co.uk)

Website: [mojo4music.com](http://mojo4music.com)

#### Editor

John Mulvey

#### Senior Editor

Danny Eccleston

#### Art Editor

Mark Wagstaff

#### Associate Editor

(Production)

Geoff Brown

#### Associate Editor

(Reviews)

Jenny Bulley

#### Associate Editor

(News)

Ian Harrison

#### Deputy Art Editor

Del Gentleman

#### Picture Editor

Matt Turner

#### Senior Associate Editor

Andrew Male

#### Contributing Editors

Phil Alexander,

Keith Cameron,

Sylvie Simmons

#### For [mojo4music.com](http://mojo4music.com) contact

Danny Eccleston

#### Thanks for their help with this issue:

Keith Cameron, Fred Dellar, Del Gentleman, Ian Whent

#### Among this month's contributors:

Martin Aston, John Aizlewood, Mark Blake, Mike Barnes, Glyn Brown, John Bungey, David Buckley, Keith Cameron, Chris Catchpole, Stevie Chick, Andrew Collins, Andy Cowan, Fred Dellar, Tom Doyle, Daryl Easlea, David Fricke, Andy Fyfe, Pat Gilbert, Grayson Haver Currin, David Hutcheon, Chris Ingham, Jim Irvin, Colin Irwin, David Katz, Ted Kessler, Andrew Male, James McNair, Kris Needs, Chris Nelson, Lucy O'Brien, Andrew Perry, Jon Savage, Victoria Segal, David Sheppard, Michael Simmons, Sylvie Simmons, Ben Thompson, Kieron Tyler, Charles Waring, Lois Wilson, Stephen Worthy

#### Among this month's photographers:

Cover: Nicole Nodland.  
U.S. cover: Henry Diltz (Retouching by Clayton Hickman).  
Jay Blakesberg, Shane Chapman, George Chin, Andrew Cotterill, Henry Diltz, Joe Dilworth, Jerome Fino, Bobby Hammer, Chris Kirkley, Linda McCartney, Zackery Michael, WH Moustapha, Nicole Nodland, Stephanie Nicole Smith, Peter Stone, Virginia Turbett, Kevin Westenberg

#### MOJO SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINE

**0185 8438884**

For subscription or back issue queries contact  
CDS Global on [Bauer@subscription.co.uk](mailto:Bauer@subscription.co.uk)

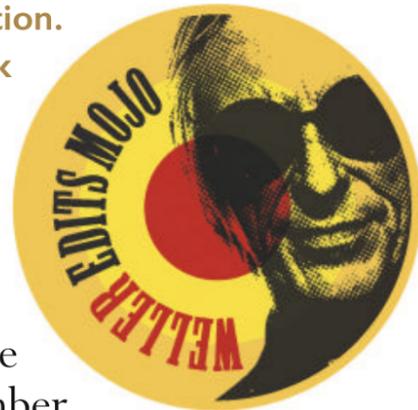
To access from outside the UK

Dial: +44 (0)185 8438884

# Theories, rants, etc.

MOJO welcomes correspondence for publication.

E-mail to: [mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mojoreaders@bauermedia.co.uk)



HELLO DEAR READERS, it is a great pleasure to be asked to edit this particular issue of our favourite music mag. An honour, too. MOJO has consistently brought us incredible features on our favourite artists and introduced new ones too. I, like many, remember buying the first issue with John'n'Bob, and haven't ever stopped. Regardless of who's on the cover, I know there'll be something of interest to me.

With some of the greatest music writers around, MOJO is always quality and with no other agenda than to bring you all this fantastic music, month after month, year after year.

I also wanna mention the brilliant Art Director Wags – maybe someone you don't know, but he's the brain behind creatively putting this mag together month after month and that's some feat! Always great design and fantastic pics. Respect to him and his team.

So even if you're not a fan of mine, relax... no problem, you will always find something special here.

With thanks and praise,

PW – 2021

Respect: (from left) this month's editor with Ted Kessler and MOJO Art Editor Mark Wagstaff.



## Fame or infamy, what does it matter? I shan't be forgotten

Pat Gilbert's article on Captain Sensible was a fine read [MOJO 329], but just one small point of order. The Damned didn't appear on Top Of The Pops with Smash It Up, as the BBC had banished the record from the airwaves. Presumably they found "you can stick your frothy lager, and your blow wave hairstyles" far too seditious for the nation's delicate ears. This refusal by the BBC to play the record explains why it didn't soar up the charts, though it did make it to a respectable 35, as the pressing plant worked overtime to keep it in stock. They did appear twice performing Love Song, and on the second appearance the curse of The Damned struck, as then manager Rick Rogers reports... "During dress rehearsal Captain Sensible wore a glorious white wedding dress, whilst Dave Vanian, resplendent in his trademark black, could easily be mistaken for groom of the day. Spontaneous applause broke out after the rehearsal and a happy band retired to the BBC bar to await the live recording. Then came the message from on high that Captain would not be allowed to wear the wedding dress.

On questioning this I was informed that Bowie's video for Boys Keep Swinging featured Bowie in three drag personas, and this was more than enough cross-dressing for one programme – adding, when challenged, that on top of that they didn't want Bowie to think they were having a laugh at his expense. Captain appeared on the show resplendent in a fluorescent green fake fur topped off with granny's favourite wedding hat, and the nation's youth were saved from further depravity."

*Roger Armstrong, Chiswick Records*

## Now, think of that for a lifetime

In February of 1980 I was 11 years old and the World's Greatest Pink Floyd Fan. I wore the same The Wall T-shirt for weeks on end. My friends



nicknamed me 'Pink'. When I heard The Wall Tour was coming to LA, I asked my dad if he could get tickets. His friendship with drummer Nick Mason made it easy [ed's note: Josh's father was jazz bassist Charlie Haden]. After reading the Pink Floyd article in MOJO 327 it seemed like the role of Nick was one of mediator between acerbic duo Roger and David. That's also the feeling I get when remembering how Nick, after the show, took my copy of *The Wall* and carefully wrote "To Joshua" and "Pink Floyd" in big bubble letters, then spent 20 minutes running around backstage, trying to locate Roger, David, and Richard to sign it [opposite page, bottom]. It's reflective of Nick's warm personality, the courtesy he gave an 11-year-old boy after a concert that transformed my life in more ways than one, perhaps using this opportunity to bring together his sparring bandmates one more time. That's what I'd like to think. Either way I'll never forget it.

*Josh Haden, Los Angeles*

## Are you trying to be clever or something?

I was very moved by the gravity John Mulvey accorded The Weather Station's attempt to make art out of crushing climate grief in his review of *Ignorance* [MOJO 328]. The final phrase – "The document of an introvert empowered by the vastest crisis of passion imaginable" – somehow stuck deep, perhaps partly because I didn't fully understand it. The accompanying image also served to deepen the tribute to what Tamara Lindeman has done with the record. Thank you – and her – for it.

*Mark Brown, Bristol*

...Not gushing, but please tell John Mulvey I loved his editorial leader page in MOJO 327 about imagining a world where John Lennon never existed. Just that one sentence about The Beatles was oratory: "Under their influence, rock'n'roll was revealed as both ubiquitous, and profound; a three-minute thrill, and a subject worthy of lifelong obsession."

*Chris Simon, Australia*

## I don't have to try, I am clever

I read with interest David Fricke's piece on the creation of *What's Going On* [MOJO 330]. The temptation in writing any article on Marvin Gaye must be to fill it with the seamier aspects of his life and tragic demise, and Fricke remained focused and circumspect throughout. Berry Gordy's dismissal of the LP as "the worst thing I've ever heard" did bring to mind the idea of the poisonous, manipulative Svengali/artist relationship. In film this is possibly best seen in Powell/Pressburger's 1948 masterwork *The Red Shoes*, with nutty impresario Boris Lermontov driving Moira Shearer's Vicky Page to her doom. Suitably engaged, I turned to that issue's Theories, Rants, etc. Stone me if all the quotes therein aren't from the film.

*Chris Rodden, Norwich*

## God, if our parents only knew what actually went on here

I saw the thing about Edgar Broughton [MOJO 328] and it reminded me of something I have felt an aching guilt about for exactly 41 years. In March 1980 I was in the front row at Edinburgh Odeon for Gillan, and The Broughtons were supporting. They were getting horrific abuse from the crowd and the singer looked like he was about to burst into tears. To my shame, as I walked back to my seat I played to the gallery and gave him the finger from about four feet away. He looked dismayed and upset. I felt terrible immediately and have done so ever since – pathetic little creep I was. At the end he was still so gracious and wished us a good rest of the evening. Edgar, if you read this – I am really sorry.

*Dave, Twickenham*

## You know, you're really beginning to get the idea

I want to congratulate you on using Lana Del Rey for your cover star instead of, say, Steve Marriott [MOJO 329]. I firmly believe that if rock music as we love it is to survive, we need to promote new artists more than the classic ones. Lana Del Rey is a fascinating character, even if I find her music a little one-note. But she is undeniably one of the few major success stories in today's pop music firmament who works in any kind of rock-adjacent idiom. Hopefully your story will encourage older rock fans to check out her music. And maybe other modern artists. Dare I suggest a cover story for, say, Steven Wilson, or Idles?

*Conor Bendle, via e-mail*

...Thank you for the fantastic Steve Marriott compilation and fascinating feature by Simon Spence [MOJO 329]. Michael Putland's scowling photo portrait from 1973 should have been the MOJO cover. In the early '80s when I was knocking on doors collecting tax for the Inland Revenue, one of our drivers was a handy Cockney geezer called Vic, who used to tell tales about the scrapes he and Steve got up to when they were kids. Vic said he was with Steve when they set fire to their school, but denied that it got burnt down; Steve exaggerated and embellished the tale over the years. A sad life, but what a musical legacy.

*Bruce Marsh, Newbury Park*

## One learns so much about life in the army

Really sad to hear of the demise of Jesus [William 'Jesus' Jellett, MOJO 329]. I remember him dancing at many gigs throughout the '70s. Always by himself, he didn't seem to care if his dancing was appreciated or mocked. I once saw people throw plastic bottles of piss at him at the Reading Festival, but he just kept on dancing, naked.

*David Lynch, via e-mail*

**Group Managing Director, Advertising**  
Abby Carosso

**Head of Magazine Media**  
Clare Chamberlain

**Group Commercial Director**  
Simon Kilby

**Head Of Magazine Brands** Anu Short

**Brand Director** Joel Stephan

**Sales Operations Co-ordinator**  
Thomas Ward

**Regional Advertising** Katie Kendall

**Classified Sales Executive**  
Max Garwood

**Classified Sales Manager**  
Karen Gardiner

**Inserts Manager** Simon Buckingham

**Production Manager** Carl Lawrence

**Sales Operations Executive, BMA Finance** Helen Mear

---

**President, Bauer Media Publishing**  
Rob Munro-Hall

**EA to President** Vicky Meadows

**CEO of Bauer Publishing UK**  
Chris Duncan

**Chief Financial Officer, Bauer Magazine Media** Lisa Hayden

**EA to CEO and CFO** Stacey Thomas

**Group MD Women's Mass & Celebrity, Premium and Entertainment**  
Helen Morris

**PA to Group MD and Publisher**  
Elisha Thomas

**Publisher, Premium and Entertainment** Lauren Holleyoake

**Commercial Marketing Director**  
Liz Martin

**Managing Editor** Linda Steventon

**MOJO CD and Honours Creative Director** Dave Henderson

**Senior Events Producer**  
Marguerite Peck

**Senior Business Analyst**  
Tracey Pickering

**Head of Marketing** Fergus Carroll

**Product Manager** Philippa Turner

**Direct Marketing Manager** Julie Spires

**Direct Marketing Executive**  
Raheema Rahim

**Communications Director** Jess Blake

**Printing:** William Gibbons

MOJO (ISSN 1351-0193; USPS 17424) is published 12 times a year by H Bauer Publishing Ltd, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA, United Kingdom. H Bauer Publishing is a company registered in England and Wales with company number LP003328, registered address Academic House, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT. VAT no 918 5617 01.

The US annual subscription price is \$114.98. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. US Postmaster: Send address changes to MOJO, World Container Inc, 150-15, 183rd Street, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

Subscription records are maintained at H Bauer, Subscriptions, CDS Global, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9EF, United Kingdom. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. For subscription or back issue queries, please contact CDS Global on Bauer@subscription.co.uk. Phone from the UK on 01858 43 8884. Phone from overseas on +44 (0)1858 43 8884. For enquires on overseas newsstand sales e-mail Paul.Maher@seymour.co.uk

© All material published is copyright of H Bauer Publishing. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the prior permission of the publisher. MOJO accepts no responsibility for any unsolicited material. For syndication enquiries go to: syndication@bauermedia.co.uk

H Bauer Publishing is authorised and regulated by the FCA (Ref No. 845898) and (Ref No. 710067)

To find out more about where to buy MOJO, contact Frontline Ltd, at 1st Floor, Stuart House, St Johns Street, Peterborough PE1 5DD. Tel: 01733 555161.

COMPLAINTS: H Bauer Publishing is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (www.ipso.co.uk) and endeavours to respond to and resolve your concerns quickly. Our Editorial Complaints Policy (including full details of how to contact us about editorial complaints and IPSO's contact details) can be found at www.bauermediacomplaints.co.uk. Our e-mail address for editorial complaints covered by the Editorial Complaints Policy is complaints@bauermedia.co.uk.



**SAVE MONEY ON NEWSSTAND PRICES!**

**AND GET MOJO DELIVERED FREE TO YOUR DOOR WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE!**



**SUBSCRIBE RIGHT NOW!**  
And you'll get MOJO delivered direct to your door. See page 27 for full details...

**MOJO MAKES A GREAT GIFT!!!**

**SAVE £££ OFF COVER PRICE!**

# WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO





Eternal life: Jeff Buckley in London, 1994; (insets, from left) actor Reeve Carney at director Orian Williams' West Hollywood home, December 14, 2017; and live at the Troubadour, February 4, 2019.

# Time And Grace

The Jeff Buckley biopic is go, with use of his music and diaries. Director Orian Williams promises a love letter to a life too short.

**F**OR JEFF Buckley's mother Mary Guibert, meeting actor Reeve Carney meant there was no doubt who'd play her son in a new biopic. "They were introduced and... it's not just that Reeve looks exactly like Jeff, but he *sounds* exactly like Jeff," says Orian Williams, the producer and director of the just announced *Everybody Here Wants You*. "When he sings, you really think it's him. Mary watched him and said, 'Yeah, that's my son.'"

Bagging Carney, a respected Broadway actor and musician who co-stars in Ridley Scott's forthcoming movie *House Of Gucci*, was one of the more serendipitous twists in Guibert's tortuous 13-year mission to bring her son's life to the big screen. The story began a decade or so after Buckley mysteriously drowned in the Mississippi River on May 29, 1997, after which the singer and his sole studio long-player at that time, 1994's *Grace*, became near-mythologised.

"I got a call from Mary, saying she'd seen *Control* and wanted to talk to me," explains Williams, who produced the 2006 biopic of Ian Curtis and the 2017 Morrissey film *England Is Mine*. "They thought *Control* captured the beauty and sadness of a musician, all wrapped up in one – the short life of an inspired artist."

Williams leapt at the chance to be involved, having been fascinated by Buckley since seeing him perform at the American Legion Hall in Hollywood on May 2, 1995. "A friend was a big fan of the band

*Soul Coughing*, and they were supporting Jeff that night," he recalls. "I watched half his set before I had to head off. I remember seeing a sea of women in front of the stage and thinking, Who is this guy? Everyone was transfixed. The American Legion Hall is an old masonic lodge and there was a mystic element to the architecture surrounding him... it was mesmerising."

After several false starts, the project gained new momentum in 2017 when Guibert asked Williams to assume the additional role of director. His first move was to bring in a new screenwriter, the actor-producer-writer Dionne Jones, who wrote a script incorporating elements from Guibert's private archive, including entries from Buckley's journals and previously unheard cassettes on which the singer had recorded thoughts and song ideas.

"Within four months she'd written this beautiful script that Mary thought totally captured his story," says Williams. "It's about his life, not about the relationship with his father [ill-fated chameleon Tim Buckley]. It's a love letter to him."

Shooting is due to begin in September on location in Memphis, Los Angeles and New York, with the soundtrack using the artist's music – a vital ingredient other Buckley films have been denied. Guibert is also working on a parallel documentary project.

"Mary has always worked hard to keep her son's flame alive in a respectful way," says Williams. "This is the last thing in his legacy she wants to do, a biopic."

"She feels safer and more comfortable with the team she has now," the director adds. "She was willing to wait forever, and now it's coming."

Pat Gilbert

**"It's about his life, not about the relationship with his father."**

**ORIAN WILLIAMS**



Cinders, incidentally: Jehnny Beth and Bobby Gillespie enjoy the view.

## BOBBY GILLESPIE AND JEHNNY BETH PARTNER UP FOR DEEP SOUL HEARTACHE ON UTOPIAN ASHES

“**I** GREW UP in France hearing male and female voices singing together on Serge Gainsbourg records,” says former Savages firebrand Jehnny Beth of *Utopian Ashes*, the extraordinarily powerful duets album she and Bobby Gillespie have recorded together. “It’s something that’s in my blood”.

Its nine tracks have a strong narrative thread, placing a soured marriage under an unflinching, often uncomfortable scrutiny worthy of mid-’70s Lou Reed. “I want to put pain back into rock music,” says Gillespie.

The collaboration was sparked in 2015, when both appeared at Suicide’s farewell UK show at London’s Barbican. After the pair voiced Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood’s *Some Velvet Morning* at a Scream appearance in Bristol in 2016, there were two exploratory five-day sessions in Paris in early 2017, which yielded “electronic soundscapes” topped with random lyrics from Beth’s notebook. Gillespie and Scream guitarist Andrew Innes duly returned to London, “put barre chords to them, and turned them into rock songs.” String arrangements were shaped with Amy Langley from Jeff Lynne’s touring band, but

it’s the vocal pairing of Beth and Gillespie, each out-performing expectation, which transfixes the listener.

For the Scream contingent, *Utopian Ashes* marks a return to deep soul balladry after a quarter-century of electronic adventuring.

“Right after we started,” Gillespie says, “I sent Jehnny stuff like Luther Ingram’s (*If Loving You Is Wrong*) *I Don’t Want To Be Right*, and George Jones and Tammy Wynette singing *We’re Gonna Hold On*. Like, I want to make music with this level of intensity – grown-up songs, about adult struggle. I didn’t want it to be just a boy-girl romantic break-up record. It had to be people who had a house, kids, a history – people with something to lose.”

For her part, Beth says, “coming out of five or six years in Savages, I was sick of being the decision-maker, always pushing a meaning and a manifesto, so I welcomed this opportunity just to jump on the boat, and enjoy the view.”

Release was initially deferred for Beth’s solo debut, 2020’s *To Love Is To Live*, then the pandemic. Live shows are yet to be scheduled, as Beth has a solo record, a novel and movie roles in production, while Gillespie is working on his memoir, *Tenement Kid*, due in October, and some Scream reissues. He stresses his own marriage is in rude health, but as he talks about noticing people’s inability to communicate in the 12-13 years “since I got clean from drugs”, and describes the LP’s closing confessional, *Sunk In Reverie*, as “a song of disgust, a sentient being asking for readmittance to the human race”, it’s hard not to assume a certain autobiographical intent.

“Well, like Chase It Down says,” he concludes, “we don’t have too long – run your race, sing your song’. Life is over like that (*clicks fingers*). We have to make the most of it. It’s so easy to get angry over the way a dishwasher is loaded, while outside there’s a full moon. Life is such a beautiful thing, and it’s so easy to lose sight of that. That’s what the record’s about”.

Andrew Perry

*Utopian Ashes* is released on June 25 on *Silvertone/Sony*.

“I didn’t want it to be just a boy-girl romantic break-up record.”

BOBBY GILLESPIE

### GIMME FIVE... LAUGHS ON RECORD

#### Elvis Presley *Are You Lonesome Tonight* (RCA, 1991)



This August ’69 Vegas live performance starts off professionally until, legend has it, Elvis was distracted by a bald reveller who’d cast aside his toupee to dance. Cue ad-libbed words, corpsing, convulsing and wiggly falsetto bvs.

#### The Marathons *Talkin’ Trash* (ARVEE 45, 1961)



The flip of ’61 hit *Peanut Butter* by the Los Angeles vocal group who also traded as The Vibrations and The Jay Hawks, this goofball R&B portrays a hapless suitor getting convincingly giggled at for two minutes 25 by his love interest.

#### Frank Zappa *Watermelons In Easter Hay* (ZAPPA, 1979)



After all the outrage and satire of *Joe’s Garage*, Zappa cracks up in character as the ‘Central Scrutinizer’ (“ultimately, who gives a fuck?”) only for one of his most lyrical and beautiful guitar extemporisations to wrongfoot the listener.

#### Johnny Clarke *Rebel Soldering* (HORSE, 1975)



The Kingston reggae voice laughs long and lists vices including white rum, collie weed and jerk pork, before guffawing some more. The title is not a misprint of ‘Soldiering’, and may prompt a diversion into other suggestive reggae records about “welding”.

#### New Order *Every Little Counts* (FACTORY, 1986)

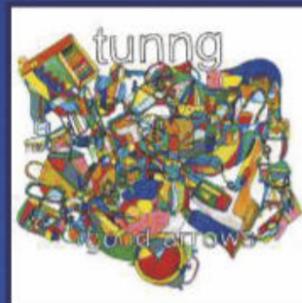


During the *Brotherhood* long-player’s beautiful closer, Bernard Sumner suggests that someone is a pig and should be in a zoo. Cue laughter, followed by a courageous rallying, though he does it again later while scat-singing in place of words.



tunng presents...

DEAD CLUB



Back on vinyl after 15 years



fulltimehobby.co.uk

OUT NOW ON CD, 2XLP, DIGITAL



LOTTERY FUNDED



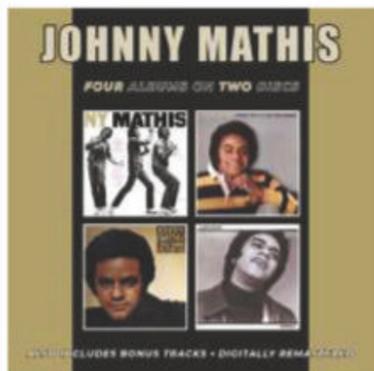
Supported using public funding by

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

## THE BEAT GOES ON...

### New releases from BGO Records

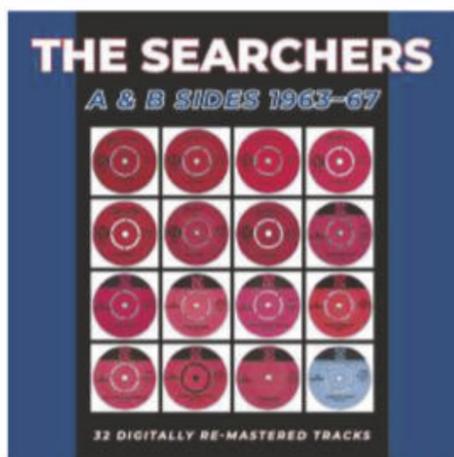
For these and more great releases, visit our website at [www.bgo-records.com](http://www.bgo-records.com)



#### JOHNNY MATHIS

The Heart Of A Woman / When Will I See You Again / I Only Have Eyes For You / Mathis Is

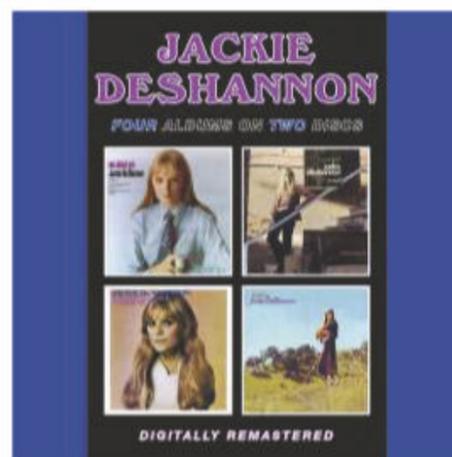
BGOCD1447



#### THE SEARCHERS

A & B Sides  
1963-67

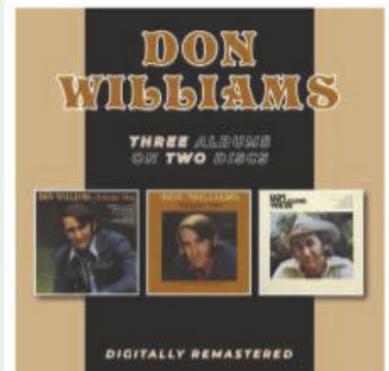
BGOCD1436



#### JACKIE DESHANNON

Me About You  
Laurel Canyon  
Put A Little Love In Your Heart  
To Be Free

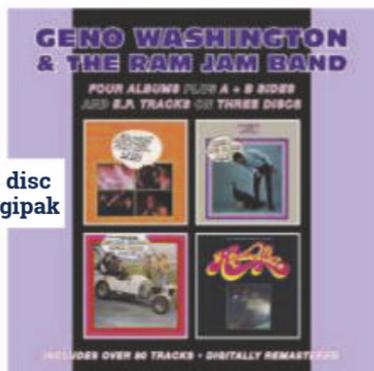
BGOCD1443



#### DON WILLIAMS

Volume One / Volume Two / Vol. III

BGOCD1445

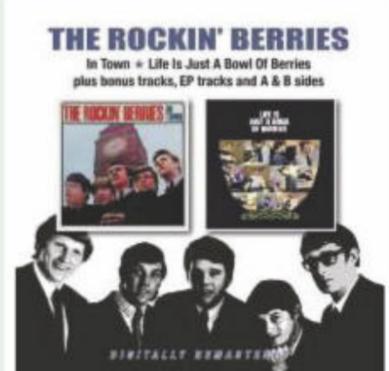


3 disc digipak

#### GENO WASHINGTON

Hand Clappin'... etc Live! / Shake A Tail Feather / Hipsters... etc /Running Wild + A & B sides & EP tracks

BGOCD1433



#### THE ROCKIN' BERRIES

In Town / Life Is Just A Bowl Of Berries + bonus tracks, EP tracks and A & B sides

BGOCD1440

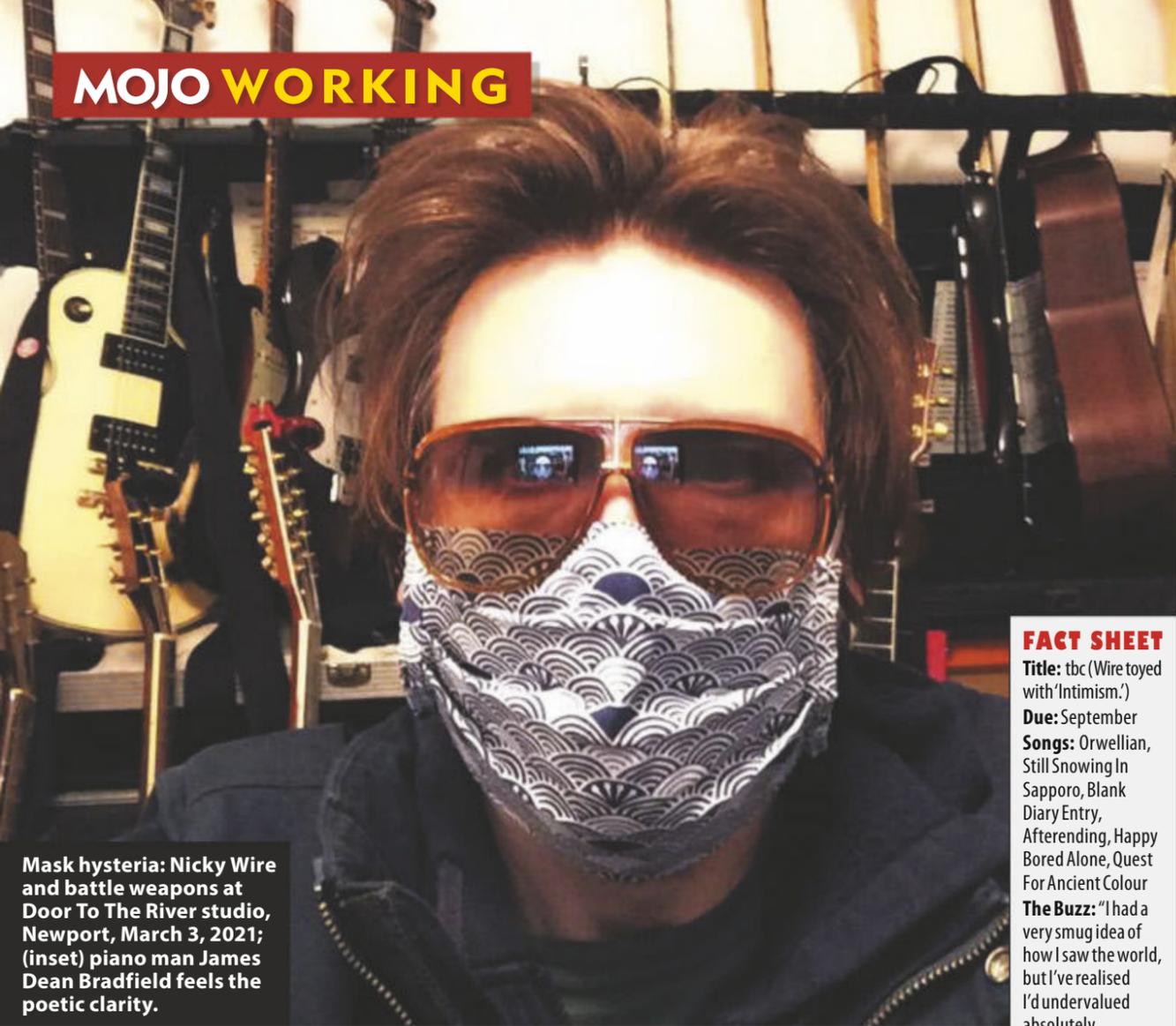


All BGO Records new releases are available from Amazon and all good record shops or online at [www.bgo-records.com](http://www.bgo-records.com)

For a free BGO Records text catalogue listing and order form, please email [mike@bgo-records.com](mailto:mike@bgo-records.com) or call 01284 724406

BGO Records, 7 St Andrews Street North, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1TZ • Distributed in the UK by Proper Music

MAX GARWOOD 01733 366405



“The catchphrase was, ‘like The Clash playing Abba.’”

NICKY WIRE

distance there, and it was, bam!” says Bradfield. “We laid into it and two weeks pretty much covered most of it.”

“I recorded my entire fucking bass parts with a mask on,” says Wire. “But it’s the most rehearsed we’ve ever been for an album. The catchphrase was, ‘like The Clash playing Abba’ – The Clash when you felt they could play in any style. It’s quite a subtle record. There are, always, guitars, but it’s very restrained for us, and really tasteful! It’s the usual thing, miserable lyrics and great pop.”

Songs include a rumination on Tenby artist siblings Gwen and Augustus John, the Mark Lanegan duet Blank Diary Entry and two songs recorded in Newport, which are being mixed the day MOJO calls. Bradfield thinks the last track may be Still Snowing In Sapporo, which Wire calls, “a reverie of when we played [in Japan] in 1993. It was a magical moment for the band, when we felt we could pretty much do anything.”

“The only way you can touch that experience again is by singing it,” says Bradfield. “Nick can still sense it and smell it and touch it, I can’t. The start is like a hollow, just the voice and a floating, ethereal wisp of something, and then it explodes into something that’s full of hope and discovery. We haven’t been to Sapporo since then, but I’m keeping my eye on going back there, and having one last hurrah.”

Ian Harrison

FACT SHEET

**Title:** tbc (Wire toyed with ‘Intimism.’)  
**Due:** September  
**Songs:** Orwellian, Still Snowing In Sapporo, Blank Diary Entry, Afterending, Happy Bored Alone, Quest For Ancient Colour  
**The Buzz:** “I had a very smug idea of how I saw the world, but I’ve realised I’d undervalued absolutely everything in my life. I think that’s what the album became about. That’s what the music did, it found a way out of lockdown.”  
 James Dean Bradfield

Mask hysteria: Nicky Wire and battle weapons at Door To The River studio, Newport, March 3, 2021; (inset) piano man James Dean Bradfield feels the poetic clarity.

# MANIC STREET PREACHERS EXPLORE INTERNAL GALAXIES ON ROXYESQUE ALBUM NUMBER 14

WHEN THE Manic Street Preachers went to south Wales’ storied Rockfield studios in mid-January, James Dean Bradfield sensed magic in the air. “It was snowing,” he says from the group’s Newport studio Door To The River. “And when the first snowflake came down, and you wake up to a beautiful blanket of snow, it was, Yeah, this is going to be a really good record.”

The story began in late 2019, when the songs Orwellian, Happy Bored Alone and Diapause – named for a kind of early onset hibernation at times of environmental stress – were written and demo’d. Then the Covid pandemic negated all normal planning. Through separation, frustration, and their longest period ever without gigging, certain happy accidents helped find a way forward.

One was Bradfield inheriting a 105-year-old upright piano, which 80 per cent of the LP was written on. Another was the direction which presented itself when bassist and lyricist Nicky Wire’s words for Orwellian took the singer back to the 1980s, and what he calls the “clarity and poetry” of ‘80s Roxy

Music, Echo & The Bunnymen and The Smiths. “There’s a lot of exploring the internal galaxies of the mind on this album, and understanding,” says Wire, who adds that lyrics argue for defending the middle ground and examine the tensions between online connectivity and healthy solitude. “It didn’t feel like the right time for spite. It’s more internalised, bathed in a comforting melancholia, rather than a self-defeating one. I certainly feel like these are some of the best words I’ve ever written.”

After the first lockdown, they reconvened with drummer Sean Moore at Door To The River and carried on demo’ing and, says Bradfield, “building the musical muscle mass back up.” After the second lockdown began to ease, they booked into Rockfield with producer Dave Eringa, working in the studio’s Coach House, rather than their usual berth in the Quadrangle. “It’s easy to socially



ALSO WORKING

..... **LIAM GALLAGHER** hinted to his online massive: “Always come back with a banger to wake people up.” He previously told **Zane Lowe**, “The next [album] is going to be called *Come On You Know*” ... **ANNA CALVI** (right) revealed to guitar.com that “I definitely have enough songs for an album, I’m just trying to decide whether



Nicky Wire (2), Getty (2)

they’re good enough” ... **JAMES** release a new album in June called *All The Colours Of You*, produced by **Jackknife Lee**. Muse singer **Tim Booth**, “With all the shit that went down in 2020, this was a miraculous conception” ... after releasing their new song Lout in March, **THE HORRORS** are self-producing their sixth album. Bassist **Rhys Webb** speaks of “the nastiest music we’ve made since [2007 debut]

*Strange House*... it seemed like the perfect time to go in guns blazing, no-holds-barred, full-on” ... **MICK FLEETWOOD** told Rolling Stone, “I know for a fact that I intend to make music and play again with **Lindsey [Buckingham, Fleetwood Mac estrangee]**... I love the fantasy that we could cross that bridge and everyone could leave with creative, holistic energy, and

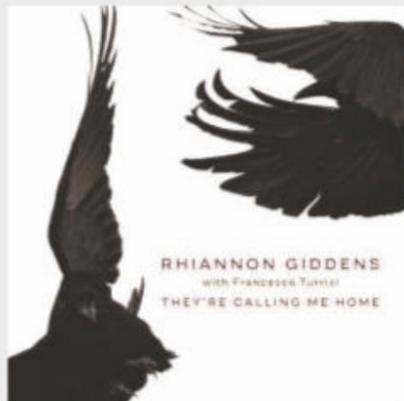
everyone could be healed with grace and dignity” ... **DIANA ROSS** (left) is using lockdown time in her home studio wisely: “I am recording new music ... I just completed singing 14 new songs” ... **NOEL GALLAGHER** told the Matt Morgan podcast that he intends to record 14 lost **Oasis** songs that “just fell by the wayside of various projects from down the years,” he said. “Some are quite old-school...”



# RHIANNON GIDDENS

## THEY'RE CALLING ME HOME

with Francesco Turrisi



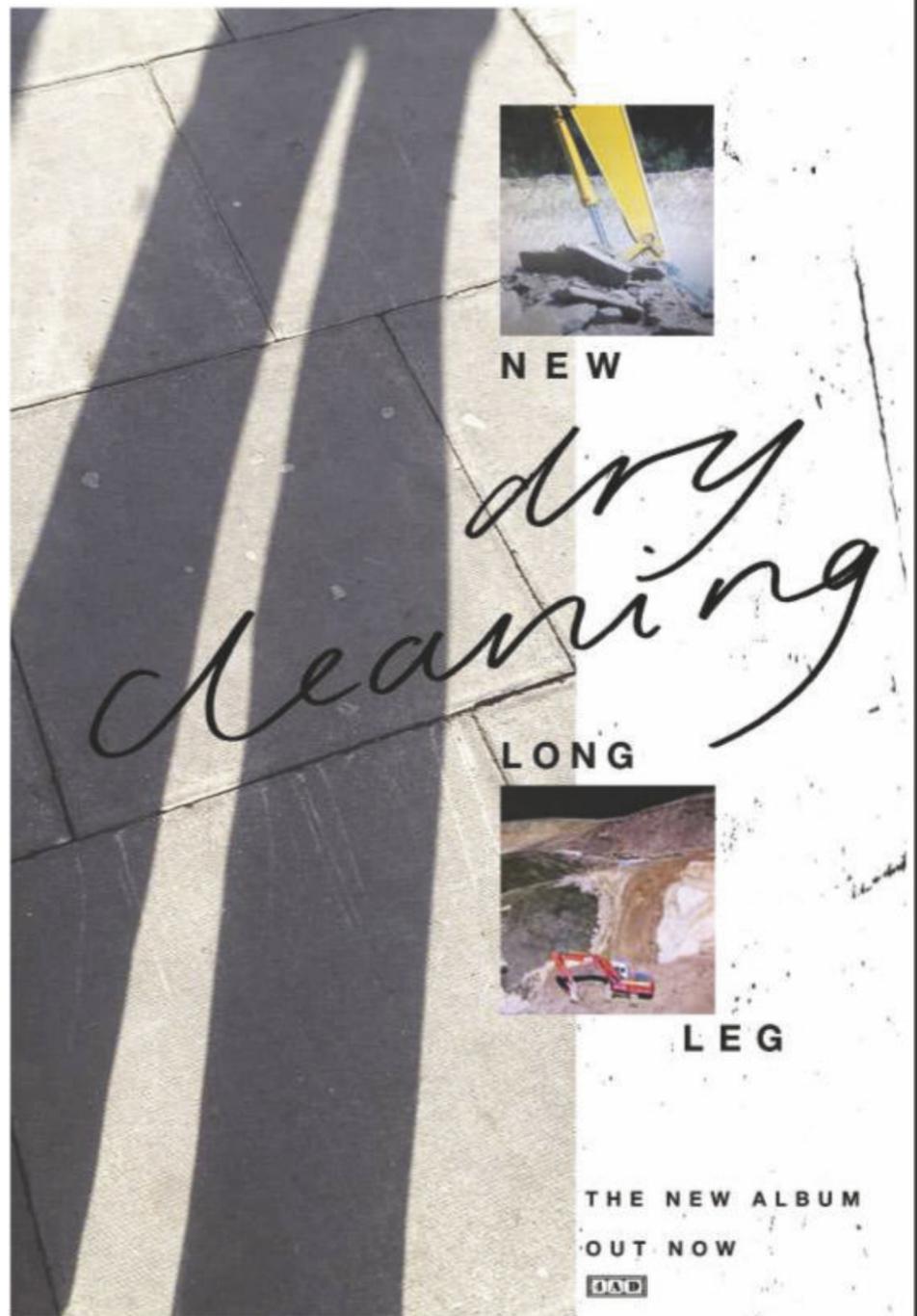
'Giddens' heartfelt love letter to her homeland.' - Mojo ★★★★★

'Sublime. Giddens' extraordinary voice hits new levels of resolute power.' - Uncut, 9/10

### THE ACCLAIMED NEW ALBUM OUT NOW



nonesuch  
  
nonesuch.com



MOJO SPECIALIST TO ADVERTISE TEL: MAX GARWOOD 01733 366405



Trans global excess: Jayne County feels glad all over with (right) Backstreet Boy Greg Van Cook at Club 82, New York, 1974; (inset) Jayne today.

# TRANSGENDER PUNK PIONEER **JAYNE COUNTY** SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

“**I** WAS THE first completely full-blown in-your-face queen to stand on a rock’n’roll stage and say, ‘I am what I am, I don’t give a damn,’” declares Jayne County in her updated 1995 memoir *Man Enough To Be A Woman*.

Hers is a serious CV: a Warhol actor who influenced Bowie, ’70s punk’s most extreme provocateur, and a transgender trailblazer. Speaking from home near Atlanta, Georgia, she cites *The Third Bardo’s I’m Five Years Ahead Of My Time* as her theme, laughing, “Actually it was more like 20! I was transitioning from Wayne to Jayne in front of my audiences. Nobody had done that before.”

Growing up Wayne Rogers, County left redneck Georgia for New York, “in time for the Stonewall riots. The police were behaving disgracefully. Somebody had to do something.” Shortly after, she moved in with her friend Lee Childers in perilous Alphabet City, where her Warhol-associated flatmates included “main inspiration” Jackie Curtis and Holly Woodlawn. “Everyone was on different drugs,” remembers Jayne. “It’s a wonder we didn’t kill each other!”

Curtis enlisted Wayne to play a psychotic prisoner in her play *Femme Fatale*, after

which she christened herself Wayne County after the most populous region of Stooage-state Michigan, and starred in self-written sex-fest *World – A Birth Of A Nation*. Impressed, Warhol placed her in 1971’s *Pork*, where the players sparked outrage at Camden’s Roundhouse, and, says Jayne, inspired Bowie’s make-up and declaration of bisexuality.

Motivated to sing, County brought gross-out theatrics to New York clubs after forming *Queen Elizabeth* in 1972. “I went further than anyone,” says Jayne. “People would run for the door, but I wanted to freak people out.”

Spending ’72-74 with Bowie’s *MainMan* management, she later formed her *Backstreet Boys* band (future *Ramone Marky* was on drums), played CBGB, and appeared alongside *Suicide* and *Pere Ubu* on 1976’s *New York New Wave* comp. County then hit early ’77 *London*, and was rapturously welcomed at the *Roxy*. “They were round the block

for me,” says Jayne. “It was a madhouse!”

This writer met her then, encountering a fabulous mix of screaming NY queen and polite Southern belle. Promptly forming the *Electric Chairs* with NY guitarist companion Greg Van Cook, County released an EP on

*Miles Copeland’s Illegal* label before signing with *Safari*, releasing three albums and signature anthem *Fuck Off*, aka (*If You Don’t Wanna Fuck Me, Baby*) *Fuck Off!!*, which featured a young *Jools Holland* on boogie woogie piano.

Already undergoing hormone treatment, she starred in *Derek Jarman’s Jubilee* (“a bit of a mess”) and moved to Berlin, getting her nose done and becoming Jayne County. She spent the next two decades flitting between New York, Berlin and London, turning to prostitution in Soho to survive.

Returning to Georgia after 9/11 to care for her parents, today Jayne is happiest painting. “I’m very proud of everything I accomplished,” concludes the *Godmother of transgender rock’n’roll*, whose 2021 epilogue finds her content after decades of bitterness at being written out of music history. With 19 feline friends, she declares herself “a proper old cat lady”, giving the book she describes as “historical... and hysterical!” its well-deserved happy ending.

Kris Needs

*Man Enough To Be A Woman* is published by *Serpents Tail* on May 20.

## JAYNE TALES

### County’s bounty

#### At The Trucks!

(MUNSTER, 2006)



MainMan filmed 1974’s theatrical show *Wayne At The Trucks* at a New York City theatre (reportedly influencing Bowie’s *Diamond Dogs* tour). Energised glam-punk rockers include *Fucked By The Devil* and night-life roll-call *Max’s Kansas City*.

#### The Electric Chairs

(SAFARI, 1978)



County keeps it clean, addressing teddy boy wars on *Eddie And Sheena*, and hailing *Janis and Jimi on Rock & Roll Resurrection*, saving the dirt for that year’s *Blatantly Offensive EP’s Toilet Love and Fuck Off*.

#### Deviation

(ROYALTY, 1995)



Recorded in Manchester, *I’m In Love With Dusty Springfield*, *Texas Chainsaw Manicurist*, *Everyone’s An Asshole But Me* and *Transgender Rock & Roll* are roughshod punk romps of unbeaten spirit.

“It’s a wonder we didn’t kill each other!”

JAYNE COUNTY

# STEVE HACKETT GENESIS REVISITED



## SECONDS OUT + MORE! UK 2021 TOUR

### SEPTEMBER 2021

- 10 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
- 12 STOKE VICTORIA HALL
- 14 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
- 15 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
- 17 CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
- 22 LONDON PALLADIUM
- 24 MANCHESTER O<sub>2</sub> APOLLO
- 25 EDINBURGH PLAYHOUSE
- 27 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
- 28 DUNDEE CAIRD HALL
- 30 SCUNTHORPE THE BATHS HALL

### OCTOBER 2021

- 01 BRADFORD ST GEORGE'S HALL
- 02 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
- 04 CROYDON FAIRFIELD HALLS
- 07 BRIGHTON DOME
- 08 POOLE LIGHTHOUSE
- 11 SOUTHAMPTON MAYFLOWER
- 12 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
- 14 CARLISLE THE SANDS CENTRE
- 15 STOCKTON GLOBE
- 16 NEWCASTLE O<sub>2</sub> CITY HALL
- 18 AYLESBURY FRIARS WATERSIDE
- 19 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
- 21 PETERBOROUGH CRESSET
- 22 HARROGATE ROYAL HALL

MYTICKET.CO.UK | HACKETTSONGS.COM

A KILIMANJARO PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO

# marillion

the light at the end  
of the tunnel tour

## NOVEMBER 2021

- SUN 14 HULL CITY HALL
- MON 15 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
- WED 17 CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
- THU 18 MANCHESTER BRIDGEWATER HALL
- SAT 20 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
- SUN 21 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
- TUE 23 LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC
- WED 24 BATH FORUM
- FRI 26 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO HAMMERSMITH
- SAT 27 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO HAMMERSMITH

MYTICKET.CO.UK | MARILLION.COM

A KILIMANJARO & KNOWMOREPROMOTIONS PRESENTATION

## 2021: THE SISTERS OF MERCY



10 & 11 & 12 SEPTEMBER 2021  
LONDON  
CAMDEN ROUNDHOUSE

MYTICKET.CO.UK  
THESISTERSOFMERCY.COM

AN ACTION! PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH PRIMARY TALENT INTERNATIONAL



# SUZANNE VEGA

*An Evening Of*  
NEW YORK  
SONGS  
AND STORIES

FEBRUARY 2022  
THU 10 BRIGHTON THEATRE ROYAL  
FRI 11 BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL  
SAT 12 LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC  
TUE 15 LONDON BARBICAN

MYTICKET.CO.UK | SERIOUS.ORG.UK | SUZANNEVEGA.COM  
A KILIMANJARO & SERIOUS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO

Peggy Seeger,  
Lady Luck:  
"My life is the  
prize I won."



**SHAKE  
A PEG**

**Seeger's  
Hot Five**

**1 Fado Tradicional**  
*Mariza* (PARLOPHONE,  
2010)

**2 Hearts And  
Bones** *Paul Simon*  
(WARNER BROS, 1983)

**3 Don't Know Why**  
*Norah Jones* (BLUE  
NOTE, 2002)

**4 Easy Now Easy**  
*Tom Paxton* (APPLESEED,  
2002)

**5 Night Song** *Irene  
Scott* (UNRECORDED)

singing my songs he did say he thought I was a really good songwriter. Then he sang my song I'm Gonna Be An Engineer and it was the first time I was ever really honest with him, because Peter never really liked personal talk. But when he sang it he left out the verses that are in minor, and I said, "Pete, either don't sing it or put the verses back in."

**When Roberta Flack went to Number 1 with The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face (written by MacColl for Seeger) were you ever jealous that it wasn't your version?**

No! We were angry, but I wasn't jealous. I must admit, though, I've been jealous recently. When my book [2018's memoir *First Time Ever*] was up for the Penderyn Music Book Prize, I wanted that prize, but Shirley Collins won it. I'm happy for her. I think she got a rough ride from Alan Lomax, but I've read all her books and she's done an amazing job. I don't begrudge Shirley – I figure my life is the prize I won.

**Did you fall out with Shirley? She said some stuff about Ewan...**

No we didn't fall out. I had trouble believing what she wrote in her book [*All In The Downs*, 2017] about Ewan trying to seduce her in his flat. I mean, the flat had two bedrooms and one living room and in it lived his mother, his wife, his son and him – not the sort of place to take someone to seduce them. I don't disbelieve Shirley, but I didn't necessarily want to hear those things. But then Ewan was a fast worker...

**Is it true you went back to America after Ewan died because you couldn't get any work in Britain?**

Ewan died in 1989 and I left in 1995. I had no idea who I was on my own. I took him on as a father figure and now he was gone. I was in a dreadful state – near nervous breakdown. So I had to find a way of performing on my own. Irene [Scott, her partner] said, "You can't just get up there and lecture on politics. You've got to be funny and tell stories." So I left for six years and it made it possible for me to get up on stage and not be shaking like a leaf.

**What have you learned?**

I've learned to be grateful. Recently there was something up on the web where I'm holding forth as Ewan's echo chamber, and honest to god, I looked fantastic but I sounded ridiculous. And I've learned not to play songs so damn fast. I've learned as long as people keep singing *First Time Ever*, I will have a comfortable old age.

**Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before...**

I'm a connoisseur when it comes to judging interviewers, and what I'd love to tell them is "You talk too much." I want to say, "Ask a question ...and then *listen!*"

Colin Irwin Getty

# PEGGY SEEGER

The folk eminence talks luck, love and ridiculousness.

**A** PICTURE OF serene elegance and wisdom, Peggy Seeger's reflections on her unique place at the forefront of the folk revivals on both sides of the Atlantic are peppered with humour, song lyrics, acerbic asides, detailed descriptions and winning self-deprecation. Born in New York in 1935, she grew up in a folk music culture where both parents and brothers Pete and Mike held important sway, and much of her tenure in the UK involved a partnership with folk singer and activist Ewan MacColl. At 85, her latest LP, teasingly titled *First Farewell*, offers more measured views, but she's as passionate, as ever, currently campaigning against building plans on fields near her home in Oxfordshire.

**Given your family background, was it your destiny to be a musician?**

I don't believe in destiny. I believe in luck. I was born into a marriage where the parents adored each other, the children didn't rip each other apart and there was music in the house day and night. My mother was transcribing field singers for the [Alan] Lomax books and we kids were playing with puppets in the corner, learning the songs. It wasn't destiny, it was luck.

**Did your brother Pete inspire, advise or even pass comment on your work?**

In the early days, no, but when he heard other people

**"Holding forth as Ewan's echo chamber... I sounded ridiculous."**

PEGGY SEEGER

## LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

### Robert Finley

The blues and soul late bloomer hails **Al Green's** 1972 classic *Love And Happiness*.



In 1972, I was working as a maintenance man in Houston, mainly fixing up apartments. I was also playing talent shows and local clubs, but it was just a hobby, at weekends, for fun. I wanted to make a living from it, but it's all about being in the right place at the right time.

In the clubs, I was singing blues, mostly my own songs. I'd use punchlines to make people laugh, so if the audience didn't like the singing, I'd at least get their attention. I'd heard Al Green on jukeboxes and on the radio, and I just fell for his style of singing, in falsetto, and I found that the more I sung in falsetto, the more audiences reacted. Don't get me wrong – I love singing baritone or bass, but falsetto sounds more relaxing and touching, because it comes from the heart, and gets into your soul a lot easier. And when you get comfortable in it, there's no limit to where you can go.

When I heard Al sing *Love And Happiness* [from the LP *I'm Still In Love With You*], that's when he really stuck with me, because love and happiness is what everyone is striving for. When you have captured the audience's attention, you need to give them something positive, because we have a shortage of love and joy. When you sing, people listen, rather than talking to someone, because they're always interrupting, or disagreeing with you. So, Al's words were a great choice, and I loved the way his music told a story – it always had an ending, you could tell what was going on.

I tried to imitate Al, but I wasn't that good at it. Now that I'm making records myself, one day I might get the chance to sing with him, you never know. You should never quit dreaming, because if you're satisfied with everything you've done, you have no purpose any more.

As told to Martin Aston

*Robert Finley's Sharecropper's Son – produced by Dan Auerbach – is released on May 21 on Easy Eye Sound.*

## POST-PUNK! HIP-HOP! SLEAZE! **KHRUANGBIN AND IDRIS ELBA** TELL ALL ABOUT MACCA'S NEW REMIX LP

**D**OWN THE years, Paul McCartney has been no stranger to the transformative powers of the remix. His 1993 ambient electronic album *Strawberries Oceans Ships Forest*, made as The Fireman in cahoots with Youth, was the result of McCartney letting loose the producer/Killing Joke bassist on the tapes of his just-released *Off The Ground*. Then, in 2005, Macca hooked up with mash-up artist Freelance Hellraiser for the radical shape-shifting of tracks from his back catalogue – everything from *Maybe I'm Amazed* to *Temporary Secretary* – on *Twin Freaks*.

Now McCartney has gone further, handing over the masters to his third eponymous solo LP, recorded last year in lockdown, to various artists ranging from Beck and St. Vincent to Anderson .Paak and Damon Albarn. The result is the tellingly-titled *McCartney III Imagined*, which sees the original tracks being either remixed in a traditionally dancefloor-minded fashion, or – in the case of Phoebe Bridgers' dreamy Elliott Smith-ish take on *Seize The Day* or Josh Homme's sleazy rendering of *Lavatory Lil* – being treated as cover versions.

Texan groove specialists Khruangbin tackled McCartney's teen pop band commentary *Pretty Boys*, reworking it into their trademark dub funk style. The band say they were already big Macca fans, with his 1979 Wings electro R&B cut *Arrow Through Me* in particular being much-played on their tour bus. "Oh, that is, like, *the jam*," says guitarist Mark Speer. "That gets constant play."

Khruangbin initially experimented with different treatments of *Pretty Boys*,

including one with a Brazilian flavour, before settling on what bassist/singer Laura Lee calls their final "post-punk dance approach", featuring her French-sung counterpoint to McCartney's vocal with her coolly intoned refrain of "jolie garçons". The trio jammed along with the original vocal, collaborating with an invisible singer. "Yeah, and the invisible singer is Paul McCartney!" Lee marvels.

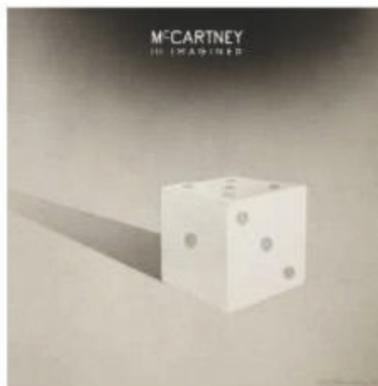
Elsewhere, actor/musician Idris Elba reworked *McCartney III*'s opener *Long Tailed Winter Bird* into a folky hip-hop head-nodder, after interviewing Paul for a BBC TV special aired in December 2020. "He didn't approach me, I sort of approached him," Elba laughs. "Paul said, 'It isn't an obvious one to remix because it's the one with the least vocals on it. It's a jam that I just loved. Have a go and do what you want with it.'"

Boldly, Elba wrote an additional melodic hook and invited McCartney to sing it. "He sent me this beautiful text saying, 'It's indubitably a hit.' I was like, 'Oh... fuck... what?' A couple of days later he sent me his vocal singing the hook that I wrote for the remix... which was so weird. Then he sent a text saying, 'We absolutely love it.'"

Both Khruangbin and Idris Elba received calls and messages from McCartney offering positive feedback about their remixes. "He liked my bass line," reveals Laura Lee. Elba admits, "I just can't believe it. This is The Beatles; this is one of the pillars of music. There's not a producer/songwriter that hasn't been influenced somehow or in some way by the music that man has made!"

Tom Doyle

*McCartney III Imagined* is available digitally now. Physical formats follow in July.

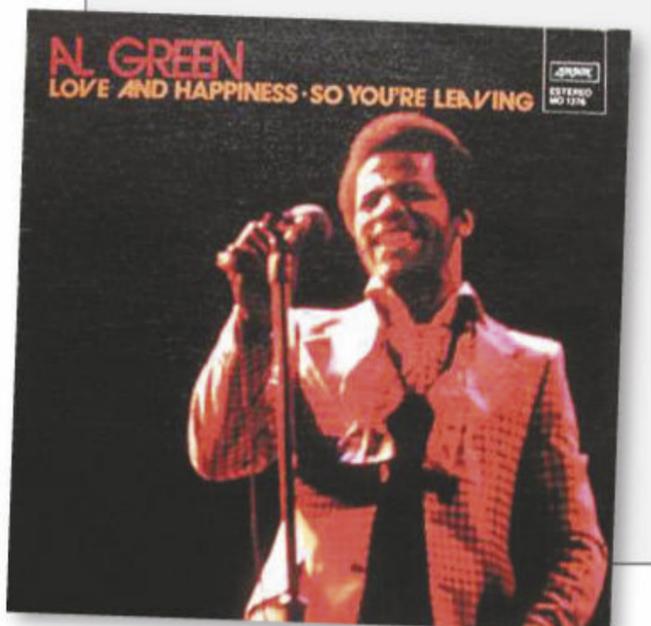


"Yeah, and the invisible singer is Paul McCartney!"

LAURA LEE,  
KHRUANGBIN



"Indubitably a hit!" Paul McCartney helps out remixers Idris Elba (below) and Khruangbin.



**HOST'S INCLUDE: JAMIE RODIGAN · JAGUAR SKILLS  
LESTER LLOYD · LAURIE CHARLESWORTH · T DUNN  
SCARLETT O'MALLEY · FRANK MCWEENY · ARTHI  
JELLY CLEAVER · SIGGY SMALLS · KIRSTY CLARK  
SWEET LEMONADE · GIO ONE STOP · LUCIDÉ  
ANDY SMITH AND NICK HALKES · BETH WEBB  
NEVER HEARD OF YA · D'VEY · VITTORIO  
ALICE LANE · LUCCA JOY & MORE**

**WHYNOW.CO.UK/LISTEN**



**LISTEN HERE**





WhyNow RADIO

THE NEW ONLINE STATION FOR  
SPECIALIST MUSIC, ART & CULTURE

Welcome to the world:  
the finally-arrived  
Declan O'Rourke.



**“You’ll see the picture, feel the wind, smell the sea breeze..”**

**PAUL WELLER ON DECLAN O’ROURKE**

**FACT SHEET**

- For fans of John Martyn, Joni Mitchell, Michael Chapman, Paul Brady.
- O'Rourke's debut *Since Kyabram* is titled in reference to the Australian town his family moved to when he was 10. He returned to Dublin to build a music career.
- History plays a huge part in O'Rourke's lyrics, particularly on his last album, 2017's self-explanatory *Chronicles Of The Great Irish Famine*. The singer only reads non-fiction: "Why make up stories when there's so much to learn from what's already happened?"
- The epic *Arrivals* track *Convict Ways* was written for a festival in Australia celebrating the 150th anniversary of the final convict ship to the former penal colony. In it he draws parallels with the current Australian government's policy on refugee internment. "You'd think a nation with Australia's white origins might be more open to the plight of displaced people."

**KEY TRACKS**

- *In Painters' Light*
- *The Harbour*
- *This Thing That We Share*

# HAIL DECLAN O’ROURKE, MASTER STORYTELLER AND OVERNIGHT SENSATION – AT LAST!

**“DECLAN’S A MASTER storyteller. He will put you in that place. You will see the picture, feel the wind, smell the sea breeze. You’ll be totally involved.”** Says one of Irish singer-songwriter Declan O'Rourke's biggest fans: Paul Weller.

Weller has been friends with O'Rourke since they were both signed to V2 in the early 2000s, when the Irishman's 2004 debut album, *Since Kyabram*, went double platinum in his native country. Since then, wider success has eluded O'Rourke outside of Ireland, and he's well aware of his long, slow arc to worldwide overnight sensation.

"I've been toying with the idea of a song about that," he laughs. "Something like, 'If it takes me half as long to be an overnight forgotten I'll be doing all right.'"

O'Rourke is one of those songwriter's songwriters who picks up celebrity fans like glitter on a glue gun. Weller, the late John Prine, Paul Casey, Glen Hansard and others have all sung the praises of this poetic

storyteller, historian, late night emotional confidante and setter of the world to rights. He's also an exceptional guitarist, a gifted fingerpicker with a complex percussive style to rival Michael Chapman or John Martyn. Again, Weller is effusive with praise for his friend's abilities. "He's a stunning guitar player, just ridiculous, like he's playing two or three parts at the same time."

O'Rourke himself has an unlikely theory about his playing. "I first expected to be a drummer, loved playing drums, so if I have a style at all it's down to a percussive element from those days – I'm a drummer trapped in the body of a guitar player."

Until new album *Arrivals*, O'Rourke had been obsessively independent, acting as his own manager, agent, tour manager, producer – a true one-man band flogging himself

around the world without seeing much net gain. Eventually, he realised, "I could keep holding onto the pie, but it was a small pie". With a support team now in place, O'Rourke decided this was the time to work with a producer, so he texted his friend: "Have you ever produced anyone else?"

"To be fair," he says, "Paul didn't jump right in, he wanted to hear the songs first, see if there was anything he could add." And add Weller did, literally getting hands-on and providing the piano on gossamer smoky jazz club tune *This Thing That We Share*, the album's closing track (hear it on this month's Weller-curated MOJO CD).

One person not on the album, however, is O'Rourke's cellist wife, Eimear O'Grady. They first met when playing a session for the same band, but these days O'Grady mainly works as a TV stuntwoman.

"Paul kept saying we should get her in to play, but in these Covid days her career is far busier than mine, and someone has to stay home to watch our three-year-old."

If *Arrivals* changes O'Rourke's fortunes, they may soon be paying for a lot more childcare.

*Andy Fyfe*

# NEWTON FULKNER

## THE INTERFERENCE (OF LIGHT) TOUR

### OCTOBER 2021

- MON 11 GLASGOW  
GALVANIZERS SWG3
- TUE 12 EDINBURGH  
LIQUID ROOM
- SAT 16 NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
- MON 18 HULL ASYLUM
- TUE 19 SHEFFIELD LEADMILL
- WED 20 MANCHESTER O2 RITZ
- FRI 22 LIVERPOOL  
O2 ACADEMY
- SAT 23 CARDIFF TRAMSHED
- MON 25 BIRMINGHAM  
O2 INSTITUTE
- TUE 26 LONDON  
O2 SHEPHERDS  
BUSH EMPIRE
- THU 28 NORWICH UEA
- FRI 29 OXFORD  
O2 ACADEMY
- SAT 30 BRISTOL  
ANSON ROOMS
- SUN 31 TORQUAY  
THE FOUNDRY

GIGSANDTOURS.COM  
TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

AN SJM, METROPOLIS MUSIC, DF, VMS,  
MCD & THINK ORCHARD PRESENTATION IN  
ASSOCIATION WITH CAA



SJM Concerts & DF by arrangement with Paradigm presents

# doves

plus special guests



**TOUR RESCHEDULED TO 2022**  
ORIGINAL TICKETS REMAIN VALID

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Fri 11 February 2022<br/><b>CARDIFF UNIVERSITY GREAT HALL</b></p> <p>Sat 12 February 2022<br/><b>LIVERPOOL EVENTIM OLYMPIA</b></p> <p>Mon 14 February 2022<br/><b>BELFAST LIMELIGHT</b></p> <p>Tue 15 February 2022<br/><b>DUBLIN OLYMPIA</b></p> <p>Thu 17 February 2022 <b>SOLD OUT</b><br/><b>SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY</b></p> | <p>Fri 18 February 2022 <b>SOLD OUT</b><br/>TICKETS VALID FROM SAT 10 APRIL 2021<br/>Sat 19 February 2022<br/>TICKETS VALID FROM SUN 11 APRIL 2021</p> <p>Mon 21 February 2022<br/><b>NORWICH UEA</b></p> <p>Tue 22 February 2022<br/><b>BOURNEMOUTH O2 ACADEMY</b></p> <p>Wed 23 February 2022<br/><b>BRIGHTON DOME</b></p> <p>Fri 25 February 2022 <b>SOLD OUT</b><br/>TICKETS VALID FROM FRI 26 MARCH BRIXTON 2021<br/><b>LONDON O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON</b></p> | <p>Sat 26 February 2022<br/>TICKETS VALID FROM SAT 27 MARCH 2021<br/>PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE<br/><b>LONDON O2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN</b></p> <p>Mon 28 February 2022<br/><b>BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY</b></p> <p>Tue 01 March 2022<br/><b>BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY</b></p> <p>Thu 03 March 2022 <b>SOLD OUT</b><br/><b>MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO</b></p> <p>Fri 04 March 2022 <b>SOLD OUT</b><br/><b>NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY</b></p> <p>Sat 05 March 2022<br/>PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE<br/><b>NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL</b></p> |
|--|--|---|

gigsandtours.com | ticketmaster.co.uk | dovesofficial.com

The No.1 THE UNIVERSAL WANT Out Now

SJM CONCERTS, DFC & MCD BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO & PROMM PRESENT

# james

PLUS VERY SPECIAL GUESTS

## HAPPY MONDAYS

### NOVEMBER 2021

**THURSDAY 25**  
LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA

**FRIDAY 26**  
BIRMINGHAM UTILITA ARENA

**SUNDAY 28**  
CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA

**TUESDAY 30**  
GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO

### DECEMBER 2021

**WEDNESDAY 01**  
DUBLIN 3 ARENA

**F<sup>SOLD OUT</sup> 03**  
MANCHESTER AO ARENA

**SATURDAY 04**  
LONDON THE SSE ARENA  
WEMBLEY

TICKETMASTER.CO.UK  
GIGSANDTOURS.COM  
WEAREJAMES.COM



# TURIN BRAKES

the Optimist Lp  
20th anniversary tour

### October 2021

- Thu 07 Southampton The 1865
- Fri 08 Cambridge Junction
- Sat 09 London O2 Shepherds Bush Empire
- Sun 10 Brighton Chalk
- Thu 14 Bristol O2 Academy
- Fri 15 Manchester Cathedral
- Sat 16 Newcastle Boiler Shop
- Sun 17 Glasgow Barrowlands
- Thu 21 Birmingham O2 Institute
- Fri 22 Leeds University Stylus
- Sat 23 Liverpool O2 Academy
- Sun 24 Cardiff Tramshed

Gigsandtours.com / Ticketmaster.co.uk / Turinbrakes.com

An SJM Concerts & Beyond Presents presentation by arrangement with DMF Music



SJM CONCERTS & DF CONCERTS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH EDGE ST LIVE PRESENT

# JOHN COOPER CLARKE

I WANNA BE YOURS  
2022  
UK TOUR

RESCHEDULED DATES ORIGINAL TICKETS REMAIN VALID

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>EXTRA DATE ADDED DUE TO DEMAND<br/>WED 16 MARCH<br/>BEXHILL DE LA WARR PAVILION</p> <p>FRI 18 MARCH<br/>LIVERPOOL MOUNTFORD HALL</p> <p>SUN 20 MARCH<br/>BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL</p> <p>THU 24 MARCH CHANGE OF VENUE<br/>LEEDS O2 ACADEMY</p> <p>WED 30 MARCH<br/>BRIGHTON DOME</p> <p>EXTRA DATE ADDED DUE TO DEMAND<br/>FRI 01 APRIL<br/>CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE</p> | <p>THU 07 APRIL<br/>SOUTHEND PALACE THEATRE</p> <p>FRI 08 APRIL<br/>LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO</p> <p>TUE 12 APRIL<br/>LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL</p> <p>WED 13 APRIL<br/>MANCHESTER BRIDGEWATER HALL</p> <p>SAT 16 APRIL<br/>EDINBURGH QUEENS HALL</p> <p>FRI 22 APRIL<br/>SOUTHAMPTON O2 GUILDHALL</p> <p>SAT 30 APRIL<br/>GATESHEAD SAGE</p> |
|--|--|

THE NEW AUTOBIOGRAPHY 'I WANNA BE YOURS' IS AVAILABLE NOW



# A WALK ON GUILDED SPLINTERS WITH THE MYSTERINES

**B**ACK IN the summer of 2019, Paul Weller invited Liverpool group The Mysterines to duet on a live version of Dr. John's 1968 track I Walk On Guilted Splinters. It had been a brave move of Weller to tackle The Doctor's voodoo incantation back in 1995, but dial up the more recent performance on YouTube and Mysterines singer Lia Metcalfe, 18 at the time, seems totally unfazed as she breathes new fire into the song. It's all Weller can do not to stand back and admire.

"Lia's got a strong personality and great stage presence, and it's nice – and I don't mean this in a patronising way – to hear a young woman with that sort of ballsy voice," recalls Weller, who also invited Metcalfe to feature on True, a track on his new album, *Fat Pop: Volume 1*. "You'll hear it in R&B maybe but not so much in rock or pop. She's untamed."

It's a kind of untamed, raw power that's ignited the clutch of tracks The Mysterines have put out to date. On songs such as last year's pile-driving Queens Of The Stone Age-like Who's Ur Girl or the joyous, Ramonesy rattle of Gasoline, the band – Metcalfe, plus bassist George Favager, guitarist Callum Thompson and drummer Paul Crilly – alchemise fuzztoned garage rock into something that feels fresh, electrifying and vital. At least to our ears...

"I don't really like our earlier stuff," groans Metcalfe, taking a break outside Assault And Battery Studios in west London, where the band are finishing their debut album, due on the Fiction label in 2020. "I wrote those songs when I was 14 then released them when I was 16. I didn't identify with them at that point, so now I'm 20 it feels worlds away."

Metcalfe's father was the frontman in early 2000s

indie rockers Sound Of Guns and would play her contemporary bands such as The Strokes, The White Stripes and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club when she was barely out of nappies. It all fed in, and by the age of eight she had started writing her own songs, was soon playing open mike nights and had formed The Mysterines while she was still in school.

"I had no interest in going to house parties. Once you've been to one you've been to them all – someone throws up on themselves, someone gets threatened with a knife. I would much rather be out playing with other bands," she recalls of spending her teens climbing into a van and playing gigs. There are parallels with her sharp-suited benefactor's early career there, as there is in the band's refusal to stand still creatively. The rough

mixes of The Mysterines' new material that MOJO hears show Metcalfe's songwriting has indeed leapfrogged their recent output by a distance. Reflecting a current listening diet that includes Tom Waits, Billie Eilish and "a lot" of Nick Cave, there's gnarled, Stooges-in-the-Mojave desert blues (Dangerous), pummelling grunge (Hung Up) and, on the sunset warmth of On The Run, the freewheeling ease of Tom Petty.

"The album's pretty much done. I just want to play these songs live now. I'm getting pretty bored, I've started watching Come Dine With Me," says Metcalfe, taking a final pull on her cigarette before heading back into the studio.

She laughs. "I'll probably end up hating these ones as well..."

Chris Catchpole

**"Lia's got a strong personality and great stage presence. She's untamed."**

PAUL WELLER

## FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Queens Of The Stone Age, P.J. Harvey, Arctic Monkeys, Screaming Trees.

- Metcalfe and Favager formed the band at school and have been through a variety of personnel changes since. "The band is definitely at its pinnacle in terms of the line-up now – so I'm not going to sack anyone!"

- The Mysterines are currently wrapping up their debut album at Alan Moulder and Flood's studio, Assault And Battery, with Australian producer/engineer Catherine Marks (Wolf Alice, The Big Moon, Alanis Morissette).

## KEY TRACKS

- Love's Not Enough
- Gasoline
- Who's Ur Girl



The Mysterines (from left) Callum Thompson, Lia Metcalfe, George Favager, Paul Crilly.

## MOJO PLAYLIST



Plug in! For the month's best exotica, maestro guitars and electro.

### 1 BILLY F GIBBONS WEST COAST JUNKIE

With drums loaned from Walk, Don't Run, the 'Top's psych connoisseur testifies about heading to the coast for some "champagne and a little bit of weed", to serious twang.

Find it: YouTube

### 2 AROOJ AFTAB MOHABBAT

An incredible singer from New York's jazz/experimental scene, Aftab turns a Pakistani classical ghazal into glimmering baroque folk akin to Joanna Newsom.

Find it: Bandcamp



### 3 MOLLY LEWIS OCEANIC FEELING

As-seen-on-the-net Australian Lewis ("the human Theremin") uses her lithe, melodic whistle to

Martin Denny-esque effect on sultry exotica.

Find it: YouTube

### 4 CHEMICAL BROTHERS THE DARKNESS THAT YOU FEAR

Part private psychedelic reel and part zero-hour anthem, the Chems' new single sets down gently and blasts off into ecstatic disco abandon, with spookily soothing vox.

Find it: streaming services



### 5 REIGNING SOUND OH CHRISTINE

Greg Cartwright, the man who does write them like they used to, gets his band's Memphis line-up back together for a pop-soul heart-breaker for melancholy wine drinkers.

Find it: streaming services

### 6 VIRNA LINDT ONCE

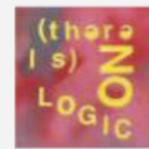
Stockholm's glamorous spy/1982 indie chart-topper back with eight minutes of polar disco tinged by remembrance and regret.

Find it: YouTube

### 7 EL NINO DIABLO DITHERING HEIGHTS

Minimal but spiritually ecstatic, this Berlin electronicist brings jazzy buoyancy to an ambient track on new EP, Dreamweaving.

Find it: Bandcamp



### 8 LONELADY (THERE IS) NO LOGIC

The medieval memento mori meets early-'80s, nerve-baring electro in the Hacienda for Julie Campbell's first single in six years. Piquant!

Find it: streaming services

### 9 ERLAND COOPER HAAR OVER HAMNAVOE (BILL RYDER-JONES REWORK)

Fans of EC's Orkney-inspired mood include MOJO editor Weller and Ryder-Jones, who mixes this *Skule Skerry* track to its bare bones.

Find it: YouTube

### 10 MARISA ANDERSON & WILLIAM TYLER LOST FUTURES

Serene conflagration between two latter-day guitar maestros. Hard to imagine an instrumental about crushed hopes could sound so pretty.

Find it: Bandcamp

# SUBSCRIBE TO MOJO FOR £4.50 A MONTH!

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND BENEFIT FROM:**

★ **Enjoy all the regular benefits of your favourite music magazine – including exclusive CDs with every issue - with our special, subscriber-only covers**

★ **Only £4.50 a month!**

★ **Free UK Delivery to your door / instant download to your Smartphone or Tablet**

**PRINT ONLY**

**£4.50 a month when you pay by recurring payment**



**DIGITAL ONLY**

**£2.10 a month when you pay by recurring payment**



**CALL: 01858 438884**  
**QUOTE: AHAA**

**VISIT: [www.greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo](http://www.greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo)**

**ONLY  
£4.50 A  
MONTH!**

Terms & Conditions: Subscriptions will start with the next available issue. The minimum term is 12 months. Recurring payments will continue to be taken unless you tell us otherwise. This offer closes on 18/05/2021. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Cost from landlines for 01 numbers per minute are (approximate) 2p to 10p. Cost from mobiles per minute (approximate) 10p to 40p. Costs vary depending on the geographical location in the UK. You may get free calls to some numbers as part of your call package – please check with your phone provider. Order lines open 8am-9.30pm (Mon-Fri), 8am-4pm (Sat). UK orders only. Overseas? Phone +44 1858 438828. Calls may be monitored or recorded for training purposes. For full terms and conditions please visit: <http://www.greatmagazines.co.uk/offer-terms-and-conditions>



**Sidewoman, shredder, superstar – St. Vincent is the 21st century transformer whose new album throws funky '70s shapes while singing of her jailbird dad. But what else lies behind her many masks? “I could be anybody today,” admits Annie Clark.**

Interview by **VICTORIA SEGAL** • Portrait by **ZACKERY MICHAEL**

**A**NNIE CLARK HAS SLIPPED INTO SOMETHING more comfortable. The pink latex bodysuits and thigh-high boots she wore for St. Vincent's last album, 2017's *Masseduction*, have been mothballed: new photographs show maroon flares, a robe, tousled blonde hair, all shot against the beaux-arts-meets-Skid-Row backdrop of downtown Los Angeles' Barclay Hotel. "Gena Rowlands in a John Cassavetes movie or Candy Darling," says Clark, explaining the inspirations behind the rebrand that heralds St. Vincent's sixth album, *Daddy's Home*. "Glamour that's been awake for two days."

Where its predecessor was high in sheen and concept, *Daddy's Home* is rich in oil-crisis style, morning-after experience; love and its compromises; what it takes to hang on as the world falls apart. Family and its legacies also feature: the album's title partly refers to her father's decade in prison for "white-collar crime". The "down and out" mood she sought was hardly a reach, given the times: "I was just watching a lot of institutions that people formerly trusted crumble," Clark says. "In America, seeing the veneer fall off a lot of things, just watching a lot of pillars fall, brick by brick."

Since her 2007 debut *Marry Me*, she has displayed a gift for transformation; prosthetically-altered David Byrne collaborator on 2012's *Love This Giant*; smoke-haired cult leader on 2014's *St. Vincent*; *Masseduction*'s AI dominatrix. "I think that all this stuff is inside

of me so it doesn't feel like a character," she says. "It just feels like you have a big mixing board on your personality and you turn some things up and turn other things down. I like reinventing myself. It feels *thrilling* to me, really. Like, I could be anybody today."

Right now, working on a bass line in her LA studio, she's very much the modern musician. Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1982 to a social worker mother and "lapsed Catholic" father, Clark moved to Dallas, Texas with her mother and sisters (she has eight siblings across her blended family) after her parents divorced. She studied at Boston's Berklee College Of Music, served with The Polyphonic Spree and Sufjan Stevens' touring band before her own debut. Since then, she's established herself as both polymath and polymorph, a virtuoso guitarist who can sing with Swans and write for Taylor Swift, front Nirvana at their 2014 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction and play at 2020's Grammy Salute To Prince. She produced Sleater-Kinney's 2019 album *The Center Won't Hold*

(drawing criticism from some of the band's fans over the extent of her influence), directed 2017 horror short *The Birthday Party* and co-wrote forthcoming mockumentary *The Nowhere Inn* with Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein.

Between 2014 and 2016, Clark even skirted tabloid celebrity when she dated actress/model Cara Delevingne, yet her mystery remains unhacked and even her rawest, most emotional songs refuse to give much away. "Me I never cried," she sings ➤

**WE'RE NOT WORTHY**

**Who is Annie Clark? Even David Byrne's unsure.**



"St. Vincent remains a mystery and enigma to me. We've made a record together, toured together and remain good friends – but who is she? We get a glimpse [on the acoustic version of *Masseduction*]. But mostly we are mesmerized and inspired. The mystery acts as a mirror to see not Annie but ourselves."

◀ on a new one, *The Melting Of The Sun*. “To tell the truth I lied.”

So then, asks MOJO, who is Annie Clark today?

**With *Masseduction*, the title track’s lyric – “I can’t turn off what turns me on” – set the record’s agenda. Did you have a similar mission statement for this album?**

Yeah, I did. I was talking to my friend Jack Antonoff who I co-produced the record with. I remember being at Electric Lady studios in downtown New York and I just wanted to feel down and out downtown. Down and out. I could picture the colour palette. I wanted to tell real dirty romantic stories. Crazy romantic stories.

**Where did that desire come from?**

I think part of it was that in the [autumn] of 2019 my dad got out of prison after 10 years. That’s why I called the record *Daddy’s Home* and I got to write about it in the song *Daddy’s Home*. I was just going back to a lot of the music that he loved and that he showed me as a kid. Probably the music I have listened to more in my entire life is stuff from ’71 to ’75. It’s wavy and it’s loose and very much about the performance; if you get the moment, great – it’s not about perfection and high-gloss. I was, “Oh I love this stuff. I think I could tell my story in this way, through this lens.” I can tell stories that are dark and sad and funny, and darkly funny, and about imperfect people living imperfect lives.

**So the line in *Daddy’s Home* – “I signed autographs in the visitation room” – is true?**

Yes. And when you go to visit, you can’t bring cell phones in and do selfies or anything like that, but I would sign a Target receipt or something. Obviously, it was very dark but I also thought it was hilarious. And I would brag to my sisters that I was the real belle of the ball at this particular prison.

**Is it a tribute to your dad?**

Oh, I wouldn’t go that far (*laughs*). I don’t think people should get tributes unless they die. When we die, we’re all saints. We’re all pillars of the community after we die. But no.

**Your third album, 2011’s *Strange Mercy*, dealt with your father’s imprisonment more obliquely – what allowed you to write about it explicitly now?**

So much has changed in 10 years. When you become parent to your parent or your roles have reversed, it’s like, I’m kind of Daddy now. I feel very like that particular title is applicable to how I feel personally and also the nod to my dad actually coming out of the clink. So it’s a lot of things for me. I think I feel OK talking about it because the children – his kids, of which there are many – everyone’s of age and in a place with it. I have a good relationship with him. A very funny relationship but a good one. He’s a big music fan, so yeah – I think he’s thrilled to have a record at least in some ways named in reference to him.

**One of the first things you wanted to learn to play on the guitar was Jethro Tull’s *Aqualung* – where did that come from?**

I think that was my dad’s CD. I saw Jethro Tull three times. Tull – three times! My first concert was Steely Dan. I was never cool. But a lot of that – Crosby, Stills, Nash And Young, Neil Young, The Doors, Zeppelin, Steely Dan, The Crusaders, Herbie Hancock, Traffic – all that stuff would have been my dad’s influence, I guess. How many times have you seen Tull, hmm?

**Were they not a bit alarming for a child?**

If I’m honest, I don’t love the flute – it ranks as one of my least favourite instruments. I didn’t know that at the time. I didn’t understand the novelty of just how brave he [Ian Anderson] was to bring the flute into prog rock. When you’re going back and raiding the boomer record collection you don’t have

the same concepts as they do. “Oh, so-and-so was just a so-and-so rip off, these people are corny” – it’s all just exploration for you. It’s nice with virgin ears.

**You’ve said there’s a Stevie Wonder influence on *Daddy’s Home* – was that from your father too?**

I knew the sort of young Stevie Wonder era but actually it was right after 9/11 – which was my first or second day at college – and my friend was like, “Just go deep on *Innervisions*.” And I was like, “Woah, OK.” So it was music that helped me deal with the depth of what was going on. That was when I really got into *Innervisions*, *Talking Book*, *Songs In The Key Of Life*, that particular era of Stevie Wonder that was super-heavy.

**How about Sly Stone?**

I knew the hits growing up and then dug in around the same time and went back and revisited it recently. Checked out the Long Beach sound and bands like War. Super groove-based but with other influences whether Latin or, like, wiggly stuff. No straight lines. No right angles at all. Groove and feel are like a house of cards. It’s like this elusive magic trick.

**You were into theatre at high school – is that where you learned to become a performer?**

It was something that really scared me but I got such a thrill out of it. Let me make a distinction: I wasn’t into musical theatre. I was, like, reading Ibsen. I wasn’t trying to be the lead in *Hello, Dolly!* Musical theatre, I didn’t understand – I was like, “Why would you break into song right now?” I loved David Mamet.

**What were your signature roles?**

I had a progressive theatre teacher who changed one of the roles in *Our Town* to a female role so I could have a part. I think

## A LIFE IN PICTURES

Visions of St. Vincent: Clark on camera.

**1** Annie get your axe: in Dallas, young guitar-slinger Clark perfects the *Aqualung* riff.

**2** On a Polyphonic Spree: Clark (far left) behind Tim DeLaughter, Hollywood Bowl, 2005. “The chaos, it’s hot, sweaty, and unpredictable.”

**3** A Modest Proposal: 2007 press shot as St. Vincent’s debut LP *Marry Me* is released.

**4** “The biggest rush in the world”: St. V puts herself in peril, Way Out West festival, Gothenburg, Sweden, August 2012.

**5** “He can channel that manic ecstatic better than anyone”. With David Byrne at Bonnaroo, June 2013.

**6** Model couple: with Cara Delevingne (left) at London Fashion Week, Kensington Gardens, 2015.

**7** With Sleater-Kinney’s Carrie Brownstein (left) in 2014, NYC. St. Vincent

would produce 2019’s *The Center Won’t Hold*: “The work I am super-proud of... I loved that band.”

**8** With Jack Antonoff, co-producer of *Masseduction*, at the 61st Grammys, Los Angeles, 2019.

**9** Welcome to the Slow Disco: St. Vincent at the, Austin City Limits Festival, Texas, 2018, “fighting the good fight.”



I had about four lines and most of it was to look forlorn, which wasn't that hard as a teen. And then I was Helen Keller's mother in *The Miracle Worker*.

**You went on to study at Berklee College Of Music but did you ever play in a guitar-bass-drums school band?**

I did a bit. I played in bands in high school and we'd do Jewel covers and such. Then I begrudgingly played in a jam band in high school. And then in college I played in a noise band that was very Polvo, all those Sonic Youth kind of noise bands with detuned guitars. It was really fun. I was doing my own solo stuff in the midst of all this. Writing at least.

**Can you remember the first songs you wrote?**

One of the first things I wrote I ended up using on the song *Saviour* [on *Masseduction*] – I'm picturing pressing play and record at the same time on the Tascam 4-track. I don't remember exactly the first thing I wrote, but I do remember that I would learn other people's songs and then about three-quarters of the way through I would immediately start trying to write my own things. I've never been that great a student, I guess. I think instinct can take you a lot of great places but at a certain point, if you want to keep trying to get better, you do just have to go back and figure out: "OK, this song is great. Why is it great?" Take it apart like a frog in biology. It's not the sexiest part, but I just find it crazy, endlessly fascinating.

**Do you think you've written a standard?**

A song like *What Me Worry?* [on *Marry Me*] was literally inspired by the Great American Songbook. Maybe my song *New York* [on *Masseduction*] can go into the canon of songs about New York. It's a little bit of a hard sell

with the word "motherfucker" in it, but who knows? Maybe that would play in 2040, 2050. The obscurity won't matter. Nobody will care.

**There's a song on the new album named after Warhol Superstar Candy Darling. When you moved to New York after college, were you in thrall to that Warhol idea of the city?**

Yeah, I think New York is full of people who have escaped from wherever they've come from, unless they were born there. It's still my favourite city and I still have so much more of

**"I saw Jethro Tull three times. Tull – three times! My first concert was Steely Dan. I was never cool."**

a romantic relationship with New York than any other place. I moved there just after college. When I was in college, I would escape Boston and go on the Chinatown bus for \$15 and go to the city for the weekend. Hoped I'd find a place to stay and run around and be drunk and see shows. Every single block of downtown has memories – good, bad, ugly, fuzzy – and you're alive in that place more than other places. That's my experience and I know I'm not alone. [Candy Darling] was just so beautiful and singular and funny and I feel kind of a perfect heroine.

**On returning to Texas, you were invited to**

**join The Polyphonic Spree – how was that as a learning experience?**

I always wanted to be essentially doing what I am doing now but it was so exciting to go from playing little clubs to – I think my first gig with them was at a Spanish festival called Benicàssim. It was like, the elevator doors opened and there were like 40,000 people. The chaos, it's hot and sweaty, and there's just that unpredictable 'What's going to happen next? Am I going to hop on top of a road case and be wheeled all over the stage?' We were mostly on the bill with Sonic Youth and the stuff that was big in those days. Franz Ferdinand was really big, Kaiser Chiefs, The Bravery – are all these things ringing bells? Jet was one of the big headliners.

**Beyond music, what did you learn from watching other bands on the festival circuit? Any cautionary tales?**

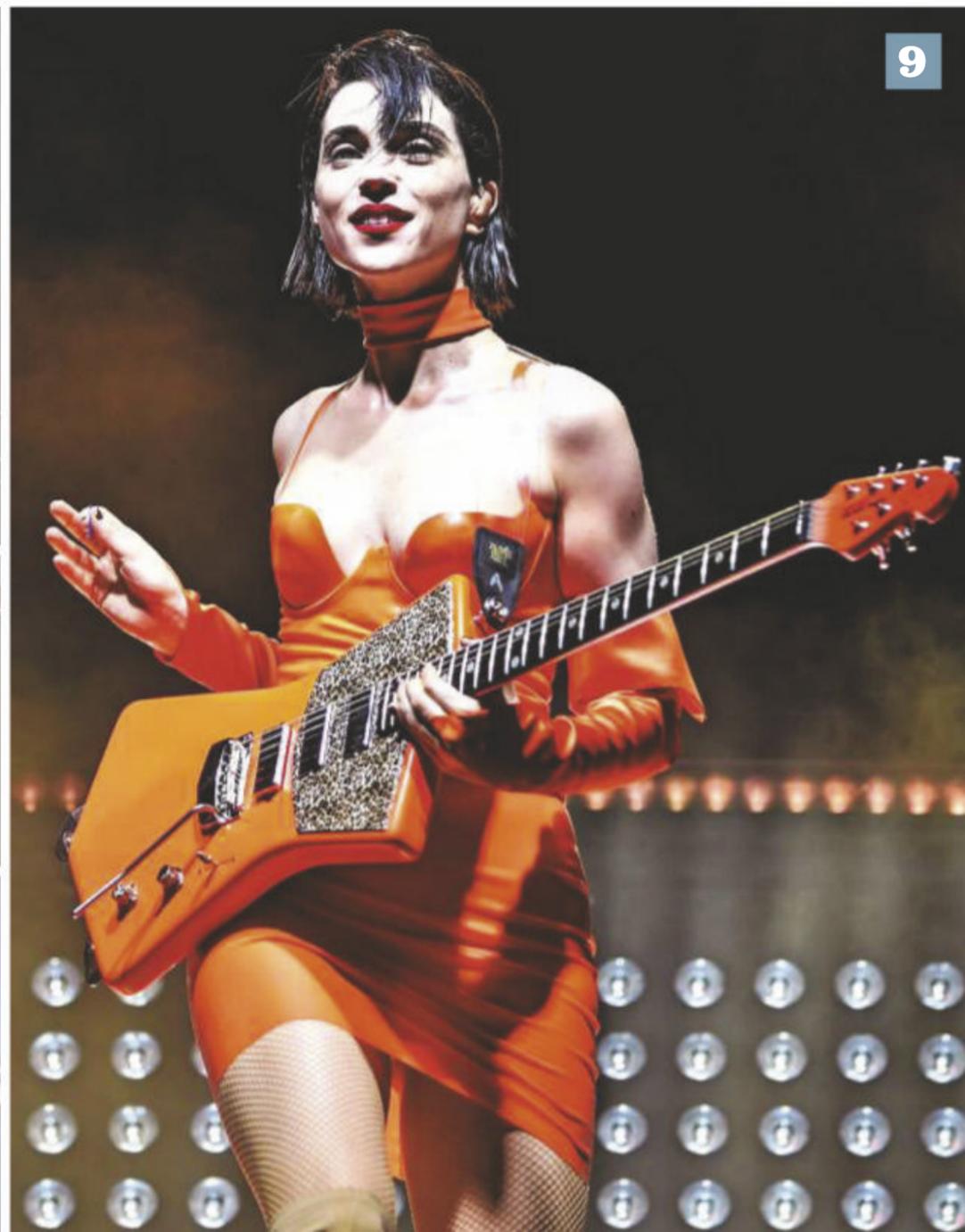
One thing that I think of is when I see people with really massive entourages. I know it maybe seems sexy from the outside but you're paying for all that. I mean, don't go bankrupt 'cos you're bringing your entourage around.

**David Byrne, whom you collaborated with on 2012's *Love This Giant*, has spoken of you having 'mystery' – "not a bad thing for a beautiful, talented young woman (or man) to embrace." Has 'mystery' been useful to you?**

I don't think it's something that I actively, calculatedly set out to cultivate. I like being able to go creatively any place that I want. And I like that fans seem comfortable with that as well and that they've given me the leeway. I appreciate that vote of confidence and that secret pact that we make.

**What did you take from working with Byrne?**

One of the things I loved about David





**“I was in a very low place, late 2016, early 2017. I had this incredibly rigid life so that I could hold on.”**

◀ when we were writing that record is that whatever he did there was a full commitment – even if he was mumbling, didn’t have concrete lyrics, was just trying out a melody or a feeling. And I think that’s why he can channel that manic ecstatic better than anyone else. But I got to see the sketches of that and it’s just full commitment, no judgement, try it out, throw it out and then refine, refine, refine. And knowing when to step away. Like, making sure your refinement doesn’t turn into neutering.

**Love This Giant looks like a dividing line in your career; it seemed to shake something loose. Did you feel like a different kind of artist after that?**

I think it’s sort of hard to know. I think that the record I made just after David [2014’s *St. Vincent*] was a record written on the high of those shows and that tour and kind of

touching that ecstasy a little bit. But as for the rest, I don’t even know. I have no idea.

**You said that around *St. Vincent* you wanted to look like an alien because you felt like an alien. Where did that come from?**

I don’t know, I think I maybe felt a bit misunderstood in life. I just felt a little ill at ease, I felt confrontational, I felt just probably a bit angry. I don’t walk around feeling misunderstood, but I think in some ways I was coming from a very humble ‘Let’s grab a guitar and throw it in the back of the minivan’ – this very DIY, kinda scrappy thing. I’d never really played physically with the idea of identity – I’d played with it lyrically, I’d played with it in music, but I’d never gone, “I want to do a physical transformation, I’m tired of being this. I don’t want to be *this* any more. I don’t want to be a sweet, curly-headed ingénue. Fuck that. I want to be a space alien. I want to be on some other

planet.” So I just kind of went there. I don’t know exactly *why* I was there but I felt I wanted my outside to look like what my inside looked like which was, like, other. Freak, queer, other.

**Did it achieve what you wanted?**

Even just walking down the street with grey hair and bleached eyebrows looking strung out – like yeah, that person is going to be received differently than whatever I had been previously. I do think I wanted to be more confrontational.

**Your live shows for *St. Vincent* were extremely physical – was there ever a moment where you came round on-stage and thought, “I don’t know how to get out of this, I’ve gone too far”?**

I put myself in peril before when I was doing the *Strange Mercy* tour. I would crowd surf – which was the biggest rush in the world. With

"I will always find something to be sad about": St. Vincent catches up on the funny pages, Barclay Hotel, Los Angeles, 2020.

physically sick. It was a stomach issue which was sort of elusive, I never did find out exactly what it was. I'm sure it was just stress but it became hard to eat. It was like my body just said, 'OK, you're going to go on a complete reset.' I was sick, so I stopped eating certain things that seemed to exacerbate the sickness and I stopped drinking anything and I had this incredibly rigid life so that I could hold on. And the thing that was keeping me holding on was making the record, making the show, seeing the fans, just... doing the thing. In a way, I was incredibly strict with my mind. I was strict with my body. I was strict in a lot of ways with the music – that's why I think it's angular, it's jagged, it's angry, it's abrasive. I was holding on for dear life. Part of the outfits were like 'stress position' [ie. a stance inflicted on prisoners as a type of torture] – everything about it was, how free can you be in this confined outfit and these shoes that hurt? And if it doesn't hurt, you're doing something wrong. Which is just very... Catholic (*laughs*).

## ANNIE'S SONGS

St. Vincent: three steps to art-pop heaven by **Victoria Segal**.

### THE ANNUNCIATION

**St. Vincent**

Actor



(4AD, 2009)



Action! After the charming antique pop and CGI folk of *Marry Me*, *Actor* pushed St. Vincent onto a bigger, grander stage. Clark drew heavily on Disney themes and vintage film music as inspiration for her second record, but turned them into soundtracks of anxiety and alienation, *Black Rainbow*'s Holst-like explosions and *Laughing With A Mouth Of Blood*'s delicate disturbances proving that she was following her own script.

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

**St. Vincent**

St. Vincent



(LOMA VISTA, 2014)



Starting with *Rattlesnake*, a song about an ill-advised naked ramble in the desert, St. Vincent's fourth album is a pivotal moment in Annie Clark's evolution. Here is where she threw off any lingering 'singer-songwriter' constraints to become a glorious full-blown pop star courtesy of Digital Witness, *Birth In Reverse* ("Oh what an ordinary day/ Take out the garbage, masturbate") and a wild new level of guitar hero abandon.

### THE ASSUMPTION

**St. Vincent**

Masseduction



(LOMA VISTA, 2017)



"At times like needles through your eyes... a pretty aggressive record," says Clark now, but *Masseduction* proved irresistible, transgressive, satirical and, in the wake of her relationship with model Cara Delevingne, unabashedly emotional. In 2018, Clark re-recorded it as piano album *MassEducation* "to just connect completely with the lyrics". Proving the songs' resilience, there was also a remix album, *Nina Kravitz Presents Masseduction Rewired*. You can't turn off what turns you on.

### Are there people you see as role models?

The people who I really love and admire are people who have been writers for a long time and who are still continuing to get better as writers and are pushing and never get complacent. That's Nick [Cave]. Bowie made one of his best records ever the year that he was dying. Lana Del Rey has always been a great writer but gets better and better. A lot of times, the trajectory for people can be that they do something really great that's popular and then maybe they do something that's less great but even more popular. The something great and the amount of exposure it gets is not necessarily correlated.

### You took your name from a line in Nick Cave's *There She Goes, My Beautiful World* – have you met him?

Yeah, a little bit. Nick and Susie Cave are, in my experience, just lovely. Absolutely. And Warren Ellis I know a little bit and he's just a dream. I was at the same studio working with Jack [Antonoff] and Warren and Nick were mixing their last record [*Ghosteen*]. Warren came in and played a couple of mixes. He played me that fantastical song about the ponies with fiery manes running down the mountainside [*Bright Horses*]. I just silently wept because it's so beautiful.

### How about kindred spirits, community?

I didn't know Sophie [Scottish musician/producer who died in January] but I was a fan. And even if I didn't know Sophie, you feel a kinship with musicians who are all just kind of fighting the good fight and it's really sad when somebody goes down. You feel sort of a kinship and a camaraderie, I think.

### In *The Melting Of The Sun on Daddy's Home*, you namecheck a string of female musicians: Tori Amos, Nina Simone, "St Joni"...

They're all women whose work I love and the song is about the way in which the world failed them at these particular times. Joni's a genius and I don't know if enough people say that about her and I suspect that that's because she's a woman. To me, the Joni records that really just shatter me are definitely *Hejira* and *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* – my God. And *Court And Spark*.

### Would you like to do more production? You produced Sleater-Kinney's *The Center Won't Hold* in 2019, the last record drummer Janet Weiss made with the group before leaving amid controversy over their change of direction.

I would like to do more of it. That's a great record. I'm really proud of it. A couple of unfortunate events coloured its reception and added up to a very skewed narrative about that particular record but the work itself I am super-proud of. And I loved them – I loved that band. I think again with the drummer leaving at a specific time it created a whole lot of hubbub or chaos or perceived acrimony when there was none. People were pretty happy to jump on to the dramatic part of it. But for the people who actually lived it... People love to couch things in really moralistic terms and that doesn't really allow for how complex the world actually is. We're living in *The Crucible*.

### Did you feel personally attacked?

I mean – who cares? It's a record that we're all proud of and I think time will be kind to it.

### Are you in a good place now?

It's like my best friend says, I will always find something to be sad about. But yeeeah... yeah. It's good enough. The people I love are still alive. I don't know, a good place sounds boring, doesn't it? I kind of have to push over the appletart every few years.

the *St. Vincent* show it started off pretty composed but as we did more and more and I was just touring so much, I was truly out of my mind. Those shows became more outlandish. Climbing scaffolding, 20, 30 feet up in the air. I was climbing speakers – I almost seriously hurt myself a couple of times. I mean, I was out of my mind. (*Laughs*) Of my mind. That was a wild time of life. I was crispy from the road. I was absolutely feral.

### How do you view that period now?

I don't look back on it with regret. I do look back on it and go, "Oh man, I wonder why the people who were helping me with my career at that time didn't say, 'Hey, let's slow down.'" You know, "Let's take these couple weeks off." I didn't have support in that regard. I do wonder why people who could have, didn't – but I don't have those people in my life any more. I do look back at pictures, like, "Oh man, I look almost dead. Who's that person?"

### So the rigidity of *Masseduction* was a specific response to that?

Yes. I was in a very low place, late 2016, early 2017. I was in a very low place and I got

**"I never could have dreamt what was to come": Mahamadou Moctar Souleymane (centre) with band members (from left) Souleymane Ibrahim, Mikey Coltun and Ahmoudou Madassane; (inset, below) "I didn't know America had musicians who were so talented."**



**MDOU MOCTAR is the next-gen Desert Blues wiz with the Prince-like energy and film star charisma. But the Nigerien's axe pyrotechnics might never have ignited without some bicycle brake cables and a sardine tin. "What's this word, 'psychedelic'?" he asks DAVID HUTCHEON.**

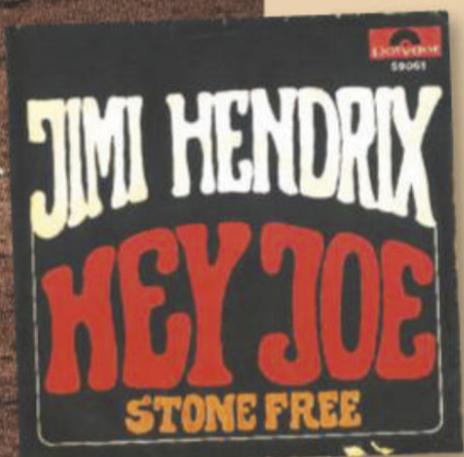
Photography by **WH MOUSTAPHA**

**"I** WAS IN THE DESERT MOUNTAINS IN SPAIN THE FIRST TIME I HEARD Jimi Hendrix. Was it 2014? It was a long journey and our driver put on Hey Joe. I was sleeping and suddenly I woke up. It nearly made me sick, just how incredible it was. At first, I thought it must have been a Tuareg playing because it was very similar... I didn't know America had any musicians who were so talented."

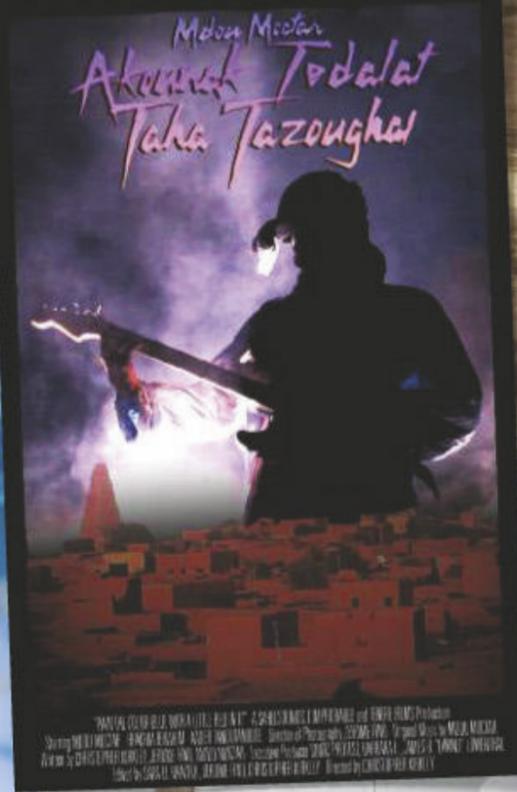
Reclining against his bed, Mahamadou Moctar Souleymane, AKA Mdou Moctar, the hottest shredder in the Sahara, the Tuareg currently taking the desert blues deeper into space than anyone else has yet dared, is reminiscing quietly while children run freely around the room. Not his. This, he'll explain, is standard Tuareg life wherever you are: if you go to someone's place, make yourself at home, tea will be served and guitars produced.

Home is Agadez in Niger. Catch a flight to the capital, Niamey, via Paris, Istanbul or Casablanca; then grab a bus for the 28-hour drive into the emptiness. "It's three to a seat," says American bass player Mikey Coltun, who has just returned to New York after recording Moctar's latest album, *Afrique Victime* in situ. "There are animals on the bus, people in the aisles. They fit a lot of luggage underneath and on the roof, but your bags and guitars are on your lap." As you travel through the endless brown, keep an eye out for the site of the Tree of Tenéré, the world's most remote tree and a rare clue to the Sahara's previous life, more than 6,000 years ago, as woodland (sadly, said tree was mown down by a drunk Libyan lorry driver in 1973), and the Grand Mosque, at 90ft the world's tallest mud minaret.

There's not a great deal beyond Agadez. The uranium mines that make ownership of Tuareg territory hotly disputed in Niger. An American drone base, keeping an eye on insurgent ➤



"No Tuareg had ever made this kind of music": Moctar on-stage at Festival D'Été Québec, Canada, July 2019; (below right) the band saddle up (from left) Ibrahim, Coltun, Moctar and Madassane (insets, from top) Mdou Moctar on film and album.



**"I HAVE BEEN TO EUROPE AND AMERICA. THE FOCUS OF YOUR LIFE IS WORK. WELL, OURS IS ON SLEEPING WELL AND EATING WELL."**

**Mdou Moctar**

◀ activity in the dunes. Head north on the RN25 – which, as highways go, is more concept than physical reality – and eventually you will reach Algeria. Libya is away to the northeast. Agadez is known regionally as a smuggling hub, but also for the finest meat in West Africa. Ask at the bus station for the best restaurant in town and you may be directed to a tiny shack where the black-eyed peas cooked in oil with tomato and onions are heavenly. It's also a great spot to meet Moctar – it's his favourite place to eat and, having rented out his car to raise a little money while Covid-19 puts the squeeze on what had been a 170-gig-a-year habit, he can't travel very far from home right now.

"This all started in 2003, when I was 17 and just finished school," says the guitarist. "I'd been working for a drilling company in Libya, but it was a terrible life and I decided to come home and focus on music. My parents were against me becoming an artist but I had made my own guitar, using bicycle brake cables, some wood and the keys from a sardine tin, and had learnt how to play in secret."

**M**OCTAR WAS EMULATING HIS HEROES – TINARI-wen, Abdallah Oumbadougou and Bombino – and improving fast. In 2008 he travelled to Nigeria to record some songs, exposing his local style to a whole new audience.

"The Tuareg style in Agadez has Auto-Tune and electronic drums and it is very fast, lots of energy, to make people dance," he explains. "I sold a few cassettes to my friends, and they would share them with their friends using Bluetooth."

That could have been the end of the story, but Moctar's music and the Agadez sound became a viral hit, spreading widely in West

MUSIC FROM SAHARAN CELLPHONES



Africa. "Originally, I heard him in Mali, then Nigeria, Mauritania..." says Chris Kirkley of the label Sahel Sounds, who released *Music From Saharan Cellphones* in 2011, featuring Moctar's Tahoultine. "But nobody knew who he was. I probably spent two years trying to track him down." Kirkley eventually found Moctar at his home, bringing with him a left-handed Fender and what must have seemed like outrageous plans to release the guitarist's music globally.

"Everyone in the district really liked what I was doing and my friends really pushed me, but I never could have dreamt what was to come," reflects Moctar. Kirkley reissued those debut recordings – traditional-sounding Tuareg tunes with a futuristic approach – as the album *Anar* in 2013, and followed that a year later with *Afelan*, recorded while the pair were hanging out in Agadez. The change of direction is obvious from the opening seconds of *A Fleur Tamgak*: feedback, the clatter of a drum kit, no arrangements the untrained ear would recognise, overdriven solos spiralling into the night sky. Truly, as many reviewers observed, psychedelic.

"Pardon?" Moctar shifts uncomfortably, looking puzzled.

Psychedelic.

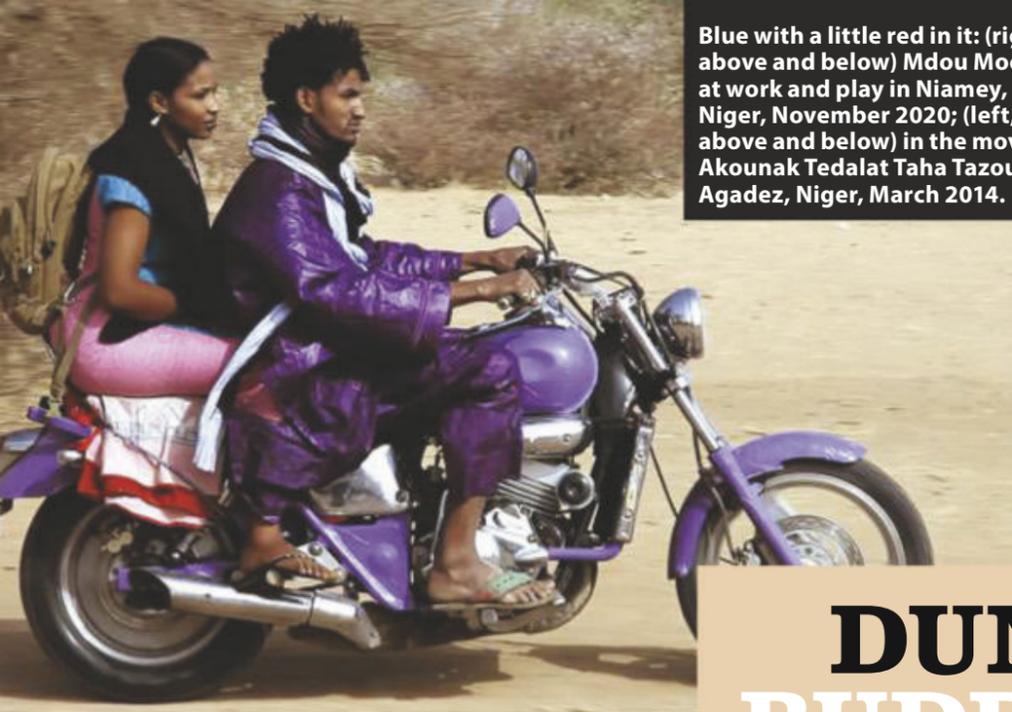
"What's that? I've never heard this term before. Is it very new?"

"Mdou's favourite guitarist is Van Halen," explains Coltun, who joined the band as bassist, driver and producer on their first US tour. "He's playing what he thinks Van Halen is, his own version of tapping and shredding. You'd hear a lot of music in Agadez, takamba [wedding songs], tinde [traditional Tuareg music accompanied by drums] and long, repetitive pop music by the Hausa who live in the region, but western pop you wouldn't hear very often. Now the kids there are trying to copy Mdou. They don't know who Van Halen is, but there's this weird mix, a new style."

Another hero is Prince, and in 2015 Sahel Sounds released *Akounak Tedalat Taha Tazoughai* (Rain The Colour Of Blue With A



Getty, WH Moustapha (4), Jerome Fimo, Chris Kirkley



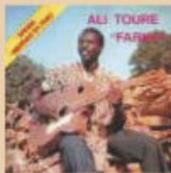
Blue with a little red in it: (right, above and below) Mdou Moctar at work and play in Niamey, Niger, November 2020; (left, above and below) in the movie *Akounak Tedalat Taha Tazoughai*, Agadez, Niger, March 2014.



# DUNE BUDDIES

Mdou Moctar's Desert Blues lineage...

## ALI FARKA TOURÉ Le Jeune Chansonnier Du Mali (Sonafric, 1976)



Touré bore a long grudge against the label that released his first five LPs – an original today would cost you more than he ever saw in royalties – yet where else do you start with the Saharan blues but the godfather?

## TINARIWEN Aman Iman (Independiente, 2006)



After two albums that explained what they did, Tinariwen grasped the myths that had grown up around them on their third. Side one's Cler Achel and Matadjem Yinmixan (both written by Ibrahim Ag Alhabib) are the very definition of Tuareg funk.

## GROUP DOUEH Treeg Salaam (Sublime Frequencies, 2009)



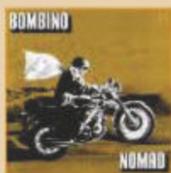
A tip of the hat to Spiritualized's Jason Pierce for hipping us to this quintet from Western Sahara in MOJO 170: "It's made by somebody who loves Bo Diddley and Jimi Hendrix and gospel, so turn it up loud and it sounds otherworldly."

## GROUP INERANE Guitars From Agadez Vol. 3 (Sublime Frequencies, 2010)



With guitarist Adi Mohamed tragically shot dead shortly before recording, Bibi Ahmed reconfigured his group for their second album, and unleashed the Agadez sound: imagine yourself in 1966, with Brian and Keith jamming out the future of the Stones.

## BOMBINO Nomad (Nonesuch, 2013)



Omara 'Bombino' Moctar ("The Moctars? We are like family") took the Agadez sound underground. Dan Auerbach produces in Nashville, boosting bass and drums and introducing lap steel and keyboards. An undeniable influence on what Mdou Moctar would go on to do.



Little Red In It), the soundtrack to the first Tamashek-language film, a crowdfunded adaptation of *Purple Rain*, starring Moctar, that told the story of every Tuareg guitarist's struggle. "It's important to show the music in a different narrative from how it is usually told, that 'rebel music' thing," says Kirkley, who directed. "Here's what the city looks like, here's how they play music..."

The film looks spectacular, Moctar's live performances stunning. And it allowed the guitarist to speed around the desert on a motorbike resprayed a colour for which there is no Tamashek word.

**H**IS DEBUT FEATURE A SUCCESS, Moctar's fourth album in as many years was a return to his roots, the brooding, acoustic *Sousoume Tamachek*. "That is the core of the music, somebody sitting with a guitar, and composing these folk songs," explains Kirkley. "They are often learning to play with an acoustic they found somewhere, maybe the only one in the village. So much music in West Africa is tied to performance, though, often at ritual celebrations, so it had to become amplified, add a drum kit, let's make it a little faster, add some solos."

Moctar laughs. "I definitely was born into and started with acoustic music but what I do with electric music is very different. I'm permanently curious about everything. If you listen to my first album, no Tuareg had ever made this kind of music; on the albums that came out after that, the music is constantly changing. After *Sousoume*, I wanted to do something different, so we went to a

studio in America for the first time to record *Ilana: The Creator*."

On first listen, *Ilana* and *Afrique Victime* sound like two sides of the same coin – dark, violent extemporisations reflecting on the harshness of desert life in ways the Tuareg pioneers never quite communicate. On the title track of the latter, their first album for new label Matador, there is what sounds like an adaptation of Hendrix's *Star-Spangled Banner*, though Moctar stresses it was conceived long before he'd heard of Woodstock.

Mikey Coltun thinks they are very different, however. "*Ilana* had a very specific, aggressive sound that we wanted after two weeks of touring. But Mdou is freaked out by studios and, as producer, it's my job to make him as comfortable as possible. This time I was trying to strategically trick him into recording backstage, at venues, in homes. 'Just play, man, we'll make anything work.' We did some recording at the house we were staying in and as soon as people heard a guitar or drums, they came in. It was a recording session, but 300 kids showed up for a concert, so we just ended up doing that every night."

"That's the Tuareg way," agrees his bandleader. "We just want to live, to sleep outside and watch the stars. That's the kind of freedom we are interested in. I have been to Europe and America and my perception is that the focus of your life is work. Well, ours is on sleeping well and eating well. You have to work to survive. When I tour outside Africa I feel like I am in school. I don't think it's possible for a desert man to spend all his life in school. My life, my passion is music... and that's how I want it to be." **M**

# THE WELLER EDIT!

TASTEMAKER, CURATOR, ENTHUSIAST: THREE QUALITIES OF THE PERFECT MOJO GUEST EDITOR. AND AS **PAUL WELLER** REMINDS US, HE'S BEEN A READER FROM THE START. "IT'S AN HONOUR," HE SAYS. "AND I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO PUT EVERYTHING I LIKE IN IT."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NICOLE NODLAND.**



The business in hand: Beatles and Bowie, Sly and Marvin, Paul Weller flicks through some favourite back issues, Black Barn Studios, Ripley, Surrey, February 15, 2021.

**CSNY**  
Celebrating *Déjà Vu* at 50, with brand new interviews and a sneak peek at the outtakes.

**THE CORAL**  
Weller-endorsed Merseysiders mark 25 years with a career high!

**FUNKADELIC**  
The sadnc madness: h A, the fun trip fron

**COVER STORIES**  
The sle of Bill Featuring Th Plus tips or and spray

**KEVIN SHIELDS**  
My! Valentine' visionary thin line be perfecti in:

**66 PAUL WELLER**  
This month's MOJO Editor gets back to the day job, the new album, and lockdown anxiety.

**P72 PAUL McCARTNEY**  
The story of Weller's Beatle idol's greatest solo:



Nicole Nodland



# Four The Hard Way

Out of death and loss and coke and smack, four men on the songwriting jags of their lives came together to put their names to a band: **Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young**. And now, with a new edition brimming with revealing outtakes, it's *Déjà Vu* all over again. "It's a miracle that we made such a great record, frankly," they tell *Sylvie Simmons*.

*"It was a crazy time but we did manage to put out a decent record."* **Graham Nash**

*"I felt like it was a stunner of a record."* **David Crosby**

*"The idea wasn't to create a surefire best-seller but to mass together some of the world's best musicians and record a slice of history."* **Stephen Stills**

*"I think we did pretty well considering. I don't think we can ever live up to the myth that surrounded us."* **Neil Young**

**S**AN FRANCISCO, 1969. SUMMER WAS not yet over, but for the four young musicians residing at the Caravan Lodge Motel in the Tenderloin, it had already been an extraordinary year. In May, three of them — Crosby, Stills & Nash — released their self-titled debut to huge success: two hit singles; Top 10 album. The fourth, Neil Young, released two albums — his self-titled debut in January and an album with his >

Getty



Carry On: the *Déjà Vu* band (from left) Greg Reeves, David Crosby, Neil Young, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, Dallas Taylor, ready for another hard day on the studio floor.



“There wasn’t a lot of lollygagging”: CSNY with Taylor (left) and Reeves (far right) at Monkee Peter Tork’s house, August 1969; (insets) solo and group LPs; (opposite, clockwise from top) changing partners Nash and Joni Mitchell, September ’69; Stills and Judy Collins, 1968; Young and Susan Acevedo, 1966; Crosby and Christine Hinton.

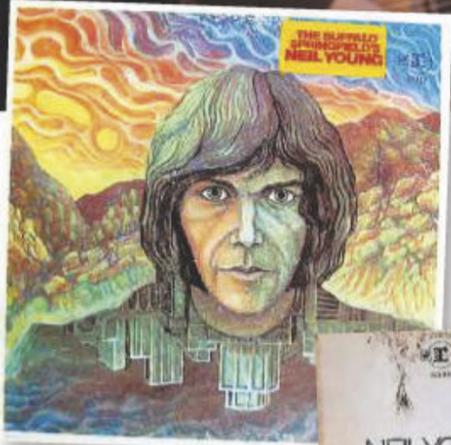
◀ new band Crazy Horse in May – and premiered songs from two upcoming albums on his solo acoustic tour.

CSN were eager to hit the road too, but they needed musicians, Stephen Stills having played most of the instruments on the album. They asked Young if he wanted the job and Young agreed – on condition they make him a full, name-on-the-door partner.

The retitled CSNY’s first show was on August 16 at the Auditorium Theatre, Chicago. Their second was Woodstock. And now, with the smell of the mud still lingering – maybe too the memory of their new member refusing to be filmed on-stage with them – here they were, in a dump of a hotel in a dump of a neighbourhood, a short walk from Wally Heider’s brand-new Studios, to record what might well have been the most anticipated (double platinum on advance sales alone, a first) debut album in rock.

*Déjà Vu*, six months and 800 studio hours in the making, was dark, ambitious, dramatic, wistful, coke-fuelled and brilliant. Released on Atlantic in March 1970, it turned the CSN album on its head and CSNY into the Great American Supergroup, the anointed figureheads of the Woodstock generation.

Fifty-one years later (the pandemic messed up their golden anniversary), MOJO is poring through *Déjà Vu*’s latest reissue, with CSNY chipping in with their memories at the other end of various phones, Zooms and e-mails. A 4-CD set, it starts with the original album, remastered, and ends with alternative versions of every track on the album bar one (Neil Young’s *Country Girl*). Two CDs in-between contain demos and outtakes of songs that made it onto



the album and a whole lot that didn’t. There’s a slew of Stills songs and a handful or two of Nash’s and Crosby’s. The paucity of Young songs has likely something to do with him keeping them aside for his own Archive releases. But what

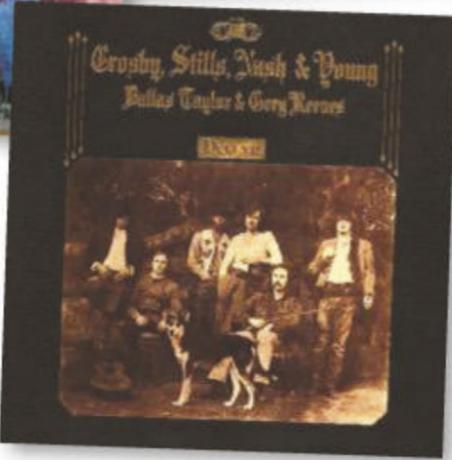
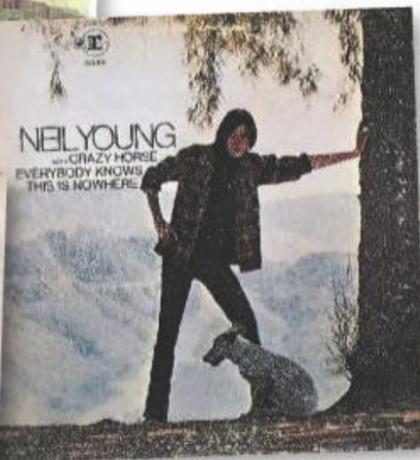
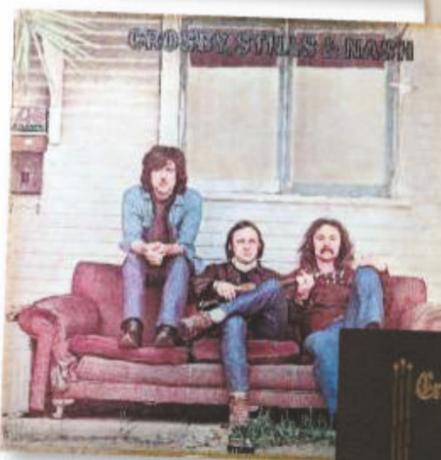
these tracks show – and the band’s subsequent individual solo albums confirm – is what an incredible creative roll they were all on.

“In life,” says Crosby, “we were ricocheting off the walls, but artistically we were all producing pretty high-grade stuff.” Songs like Young’s *Birds*, Nash’s *Sleep Song*, Stills’ *So Begins The Task* and Crosby’s *Laughing*. It makes you wonder who decided which should stay or go, and how. Crosby re-

members the selection process as being “all pretty organic”, no fights to the death; no-one surreptitiously deciding their song was too good for the band album and hanging onto it for themselves. “The songs we liked the best ended up on the record. We would sing each other the songs and it was pretty undeniable. And, you know, you’ve got four really good writers, so that’s eight songs if you give each guy two songs apiece and if you’re going with 10 songs, somebody is going to get an extra song. And

where I’m in a band with Stephen Stills, believe me, that extra song should go to him. He was the best guy in the band, man. Best writer, best singer, best player, no contest.”

There was one cover song: Stills’ arrangement of Joni Mitchell’s *Woodstock*. “We got that track fairly quickly,” Stills recalls. “I actually practised that with Jimi Hendrix first in NYC at Electric Ladyland – only the two of us in the studio, he played bass. It solidified my feel, playing with him. And then we traded and he learned the



Henry Diltz/Getty (3), Bobby Hammer/SONY PICTURES CLASSICS, Tom Gundelfinger

“Bands are like marriages, and human beings’ lives do not go on parallel paths.” Crosby



but they’d fought like cats, then Young just upped and left. It was Ahmet Ertegun, the head of Atlantic Records, who came up with the idea. He’d cried when the Springfield broke up, he so loved the sound of Young and Stills together.

Says Stills, “The first thing I said to Ahmet was, ‘Are you out of your mind? He’s already copped out on me once!’ And he laughed and said, ‘Think about it.’ And thinking about it I realised that it might become interesting – if we could keep him filled with a healthy amount of self-doubt. Actually pretty unhealthy but, you know, I figured I needed it. And it was uncomfortable, but a little tension is good for you.”

Says Crosby, “When Stephen said, ‘I think we have to get Neil in because some of the time I’m going to be playing keyboards,’ we said, ‘Why?’ He said, ‘Ahmet thinks it’s a good idea’ – and Ahmet was our mentor, Ahmet was the one guy running a record company who loved music. I was sitting in the driveway of Joni’s house on Lookout Mountain and Neil drove up the street and he saw me and turned around and came back. I said, ‘What’ve you been doing?’ and he said, ‘Writing new songs.’ I said, ‘Can I hear them?’ He sat down on the trunk of the car with me and sang me four songs in a row. Two of them were Helpless and Country Girl. And I was: Yeah, I want him in the band. Because songs are the key to the whole deal. If you don’t have a song it’s all polishing a turd.”

Says Nash, “Part of our – *my* – reticence in inviting Neil into the band was we had created this beautiful three-part harmony and we were about to disturb that, because four-part harmony is way different. When Ahmet suggested Neil, I think he was after the energy that happens between Stephen and Neil when they start playing guitar with each other and against each other. That was what Ahmet was looking for, somebody to keep Stephen interested. Someone to keep Stephen alive.”

What would have happened had they just toured with Neil and made a second CSN album instead? Crosby and Nash are confident they could have made a good one, given the songs they were writing, but Stills isn’t so sure. “We might have made a typical sophomore complete pablum album. Or broken up sooner. Or not. I don’t know,” says Stills, “but it was more fun with Neil around. Because he surprised you.”

Crosby once said, “Anything Neil walks into, I don’t care if it’s a bathroom, is different thereafter.” What exactly changed when Young joined the band?

“You can hear it over the course of the album,” says Stills. “It starts out with Carry On, which is very much a constructed song in the style of the first CSN album and kind of the last song with the acoustic guitar, and then it runs along and then Neil comes in and virtually takes over and then side two is the Neil side. It’s hilarious! That just struck me today. I didn’t even realise that at the time.”

Carry On, which opens the album, was actually the last song to be written. Stills and Nash were walking to the studio from their motel when Nash said, “We don’t have a Suite. Stephen said, ‘I know, we used it on the first record.’ I said, ‘You misunderstand,’” Nash recounts. “‘We don’t have *that* kind of a song to open the album with.’ I would be shocked if after Suite: Judy Blue Eyes anyone got up and changed the record. Once you hear that you want to hear the rest. And Stephen said, ‘You’re right.’”

“And immediately,” says Stills, “it occurred to me what it could be. So I went back to my room in this horrifying hotel and the next morning I knocked on Graham’s door and said, ‘OK, how’s this?’ and I played him Carry On and he went nuts. So we got everybody together in the studio and recorded it, And that’s how the 800 hours were spent. There wasn’t a lot of lollygagging.” ➤

guitar part and I played bass. So I knew what I was doing but I didn’t tell anybody else [in CSNY] that. I laid it on them. We did it live. It was the whole band playing together.”

The whole band playing together on *Déjà Vu* was almost as much of a rarity as a co-written song. Although critics called them the American Beatles, CSNY – who wrote their songs separately (and in Young’s case recorded them in a different studio) and who didn’t all play on each other’s songs – was a very different animal.

Making *Déjà Vu*, recalls Stills, “was like herding cats. In a pinball machine. At odd times it results in nuclear fission. There’s a time when you must just cease trying to talk, because it’s beginning to go in a circle and the same issues keep coming up. Somebody has got to say, ‘Let’s take this up later,’ and we were very bad at that. At least that’s how it seemed. But there’s some imagination going into this,” he adds, laughing. “Because we *are* talking about 50 years ago.”

**D**AVID GEFFEN – CSNY’S CO-MANAGER WITH ELLIOT Roberts – once said of CSNY that what they had in common was “they’re musicians. And that’s about it.” Nash, he said, was an “extremely modest and quiet gentleman” and Stills “not particularly modest about anything”, while Crosby was “a revolutionary-type individual” and Young “very shy and not interested at all in all the big pop star bullshit.”

The reason CSN were able to put differences and egos aside was harmony – literally first, then figuratively. From the first time they sang together and those distinctive harmonies came out, it was love. The late Paul Rothchild, who produced CSN’s original song demo, said they would play and sing to everyone, and everyone who heard their harmonies fell to their knees. CSN “could have started a religion”, he said. Like CSN, Rothchild lived in Laurel Canyon, whose sunny, mellow, harmonious vibe was all over CSN. Into this little Eden walks Neil Young.

Of all the guitarists in the world, why choose this one to play in their touring band, and change their name to accommodate him? CSN’s album had made it to Number 6 in the charts, Young’s debut didn’t even make the Top 100. In that regard, he needed them more than they did. Yes, he had history with Stills in the Buffalo Springfield,



*"Making Déjà Vu was like herding cats. In a pinball machine. At odd times it results in nuclear fission." Stills*



"You're thrilled with being in this band": (clockwise from above) Stills, Young, Nash, Crosby rehearse for TV, Los Angeles, September 22, 1969; (insets below) CSNY solo LPs that followed *Déjà Vu*.



STEPHEN STILLS



◀ Still, there'd have been many fewer hours if Young, evangelist of the first-take, warts-and-all approach, had had his way instead of Stills, the perfectionist. "I was nit-picking!" Stills admits. "I was finding little flaws. Neil would do something and I would have a suggestion for a little tiny fix. Neil would say, 'That doesn't matter, it feels good!' Actually Neil was right. But I was very meticulous in those days."

So Stills' reputation as a dictator wasn't overestimated?

"No, it was. I wasn't Donald Trump, for pity's sake! I'd get an idea and I'd keep going until I heard it back in the speakers and Graham was the only one who understood that. Actually, Neil did too, and he'd go along until he could tell me with a straight face, 'That doesn't make any sense Stephen, let's move on,' and I would."

**ONE GREAT MYTH ABOUT *DÉJÀ Vu*** is that, like nothing else, it embodied the death of the hippy dream.

That they began recording in July '69, one month after the Manson killings in the Canyons, and ended in January '70, the month after Altamont – at which they played – fits this theory. It's a deeper, darker, lonelier, more inward-looking album than *Crosby Stills & Nash*. You can see it on the album sleeve, too. Where CSN's group shot has them hanging outside a hippy house on an old sofa in the sun, *Déjà Vu*'s has a sober, gritty, sepia photo of six unsmiling men and a stray dog, looking like something from the Civil War.

It was Stills' idea. At first, at Stills' insistence, they tried using a bulky camera from the 19th century. It didn't work. "So we took the picture with a regular camera and degraded it, then glued it on a hymnal. Because everything was so important," Stills explains, "I figured a hymnal would do."

He settled instead on some very expensive paper that looked like leatherette. With the initial pressings, each photo had to be stuck

on by hand. "Ahmet called me personally and said, 'What are you doing?! That's the most expensive album cover we ever did.' I said, 'Don't worry, it will sell a lot, we'll make it up,' which they did.

But *Déjà Vu* wasn't intended to be an album about the *Zeitgeist*. It was personal – reflecting for the most part on all four having lost their romantic partners. In the short space between Nash writing *Our House* in the Laurel Canyon home he shared with Joni Mitchell and recording it in San Francisco, Joni had broken up with him. "Devastating," Nash says. Crosby's partner Christine Hinton had just been killed in a car accident. "I was completely unable to deal with it," says Crosby. "It was a very, very dark time. I would wind up sitting on the studio floor crying." Stills' girlfriend Judy Collins, the muse of *Suite: Judy Blue Eyes*, left him too.

"Well that's enough, isn't it?" says Stills. "A lot of darkness. You'd need a quadruple album to cover everything. We erred on the side of caution, not being too morose, you know? 4 + 20 pretty much covered it for everybody. I mean, it's about bloody suicide, isn't it?"

And Young had broken up with his wife Susan Acevedo, leaving their Topanga Canyon house on the hill and heading north to San Francisco with his two pet bush babies, Harry and Speedy, now living with him in the motel.

"You'd knock on Neil's door," Nash recalls, "and it would open a little crack and then *boing!* one of these little creatures would land on Neil's shoulder and he would finally open the door."

Nash says they all looked out for each other during their personal turmoils. "When one of us was weak, the other was strong. If somebody was a little out of it somebody would be more stable. It was an ever constantly moving thing that pivoted on the music. The music was our saviour really. We could come together in music and that was a way to deal with our personal problems." It was also good to be among friends; the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane were also recording at Wally Heider's.

One night, after laying down the tracks for *Teach Your Children*, Nash waited to see whether Young or Stills would add a solo.

"Stephen said, 'Between me and Neil we've done about 12 solos on this record; what can we do that's different?' Croz said that [the

Dead's] Jerry [Garcia] had been learning pedal steel so let's go ask him. So we went next door and he listened to the song and said, 'Let me at it!' He brought his pedal steel into our studio and did the first take and I told him, 'Thank you very much, that's great.' He said, 'Actually I fucked up' and did a second take. But at the end of the day we went with the first, because it sounded so innocent, so together with the spirit of the song."

Besides music, they were also trying to deal with their problems with drugs. When I ask them all what they might have done differently, given the benefit of 50 years hindsight, Nash says, "I would have kept cocaine out of the studio. It isolates you. Makes you selfish. Things get a little colder. Smiles get lost in between."

Stills agrees. "Certainly could have done without the drugs, or so much of them. Cocaine enhances your personality – but what if you're an asshole?"

And Crosby says, "If I hadn't been doing coke and heroin, everything – dealing with them; dealing with that girl's death – would have been 10 times better and easier. It's a miracle that we made such a great record, frankly. I'm amazed that it came out and that all the way through it was at the level it was. I'm very proud of it."

**D**ÉJÀ VU SOLD SEVEN MILLION copies and spent nearly a hundred weeks in the charts. CSNY set off on a turbulent tour which at one point led to Crosby, Nash and Young firing Stills. They reinstated him. Within months of the CSNY album, each of them released a significant, acclaimed solo album – Crosby's *If I Could Only Remember My Name*; Stills' *Stills*; Nash's *Songs For Beginners* and Young's *After The Gold Rush* – all featuring at least one other of their CSNY bandmates. Yet it would be another 18 years before the full name adorned a second studio album.

Although CSNY has never officially bro-

# Harmony Rockets

Five killer outtakes from the upcoming, bumper *Déjà Vu*, selected by Sylvie Simmons.

## Our House

**Graham Nash & Joni Mitchell (demo)**  
In a sense the soul of *Déjà Vu*: a guileless song of domestic bliss written at "Willie" and Joni's house but not recorded until after she dumped him. They were still together when Jane Lurie, Joni's former NYC roommate, recorded the pair singing it at her piano on a visit. Joni's harmony sounds gleefully childlike.

## Birds

**Neil Young & Graham Nash (demo)**  
Just Young and Nash and an acoustic guitar which, in a dash of dialogue, Nash asks him to tune. It's slow, stately and downright beautiful. Nash's perfect high harmonies and Young's "oohs" make it more sorrowful still than the version on *After The Gold Rush*.

## Song With No Words

**David Crosby & Graham Nash (demo)**  
Croz and Nash aren't talking these days, but back then they were bosom buddies – Nash had recently accompanied his suicidally-sad friend on a lengthy sea voyage on his schooner. Here their harmonies are impossibly perfect, fused, parting, then sewn back up again.

## So Begins The Task / Hold On Tight

**Stephen Stills (demo)**  
About as different as could be from the version on Stills' *Manassas*, *So Begins...* is sung solo on acoustic guitar – spare and raw, sounding like a great coffeehouse folk song. His now-ex girlfriend Judy Collins recorded her own version of it within the year.

## Laughing

**David Crosby (demo)**  
A deeply moving version of a beautiful song by and about a man trying to find a way through despair and back to a place of innocence. Crosby's voice is luminous over the slow, solo, doomy acoustic guitar. A second version in the outtakes has a slightly different feel, not so majestically mournful.

ken up, the past half century has witnessed any number of instances of its members coming together, leaving, or teaming up for various lengths of time in one incarnation or another: CSNY, CSN, Crosby & Nash, the Stills-Young Band. Can they say what it is that draws them together – and what pushes them apart?

Crosby, Stills and Nash all agree on the answer to the first half of the question: "The music". Tackling the second half, Crosby says, "Bands are like marriages, and human beings' lives do not go on parallel paths. We're always either getting closer to each other or getting further away. Always. Bands, when they start out, you're really in love with each other because you love each other's music and the excitement that you're causing and you're thrilled with being in this band. But after 40 years that devolves to 'turn on the smoke machine and play your hits'."

None of them mentions the Neil Young factor. I asked Young once why he was the only one in CSNY who refused to be filmed at Woodstock. He said, "I was the only person in Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young that was, you know, not Crosby, Stills & Nash. I just didn't want to do that." When I asked if actually he enjoyed being in a band, part of a team, and not a solo artist he said, "Sure. Still do. It's why I've got Crazy Horse." And CSNY? "A lot of the things that Stephen and I – all our guitar playing in Crosby, Stills & Nash – was all just residue from the Buffalo Springfield. It was from playing with the big beat and without the big star trip. It was the real thing."

Talking about the dynamic of the band in Jimmy McDonough's biography *Shakey*, Young summed it up this way: "Crosby was the catalyst, the spiritual leader of the band. Stills was musical director. Graham was kind of like the CEO." And himself? "Turns out I was just passing through." M

*Déjà Vu*, the 50th Anniversary Deluxe Edition is available in 4-CD/1-LP, 5-LP, and digital formats and will be released on May 14 by Rhino.

"It was the real thing": (from left) Stills, Young, Nash and Crosby carry on again, Bridge School Benefit, Shoreline Amphitheatre, Mountain View, CA, October 26, 2013.



# WORSE THINGS



A decade ago, **THE CORAL** hit a reef, in a perfect storm of financial and mental health crises. Miraculously, they stayed afloat and in 2021 the Weller-approved Wirral-ites celebrate their Silver Jubilee with *Coral Island*, their mystical masterpiece. It's a strange saga, but, as they tell **ANDREW MAZE**, "we are a little bit odd."

Photograph **ANDREW BOTTERILL**.

IT'S OVER 10 YEARS SINCE MOJO LAST SAT DOWN properly with The Coral. Back then the Wirral-based quintet were promoting their sixth studio release, the John Leckie-produced *Butterfly House*. An album of lush melodic psychedelia, it felt confident, assured. "We're stronger than ever," frontman James Skelly told MOJO, as the band prepared for a UK tour and a sold-out gig at the Royal Albert Hall. "We've got the map now. We've got to push on."

What happened instead was a dead stop.

"Yeah," says Skelly with a sigh. "I had a breakdown. I had to move back to my mom's and I kipped on my younger brother

Alfie's floor for about a year. I was hallucinating, I couldn't remember where I'd been. I just thought, I'm absolutely fucked and I need to just stop. I'm ill."

Skelly also started to doubt himself as a musician and as the leader of The Coral. "I felt I'd become a caricature of what I thought I should be," he says, "playing a part, but distant from that part. Then, one day, I was lying on the beach, speaking to my little brother. I looked at the moon, and the sea was in the distance and I felt OK. I'd been thinking, How do I function, so I can go forward? I needed a new way to do The Coral. Little things like that started to help. I thought, OK. That moment there. Every time you feel like that, that's good. Don't question it."

# HAPPEN AT SEA



To the manor born: The Coral at Woolton Hall, Liverpool, February 16, 2021 (from left) Paul Molloy, Paul Duffy, James Skelly, Ian Skelly, Nick Power.

**2** DECADE LATER AND THE 40-YEAR-OLD SKELLY IS talking to MOJO from Liverpool's Parr Street Studios about his group's new album, *Coral Island*. Their tenth long-player, it is, more importantly, their third since the end of their self-enforced six-year hiatus in 2016 and the one that perhaps best exemplifies Skelly's restorative belief in the power of sea, sky, and the magical power of those small, telling moments.

A double concept album, set in a fictitious seaside town seemingly located somewhere between actual New Brighton and ghost story master M.R. James's haunted Seaburgh, it's a haunting rumination on place and time, told through 15 exquisitely melodic ba-

roque-pop gems, songs of escapism, fatalism and hope interlaced with other-worldly narrative fragments, written by the band's keyboard player Nick Power and related in rolling Mersey brogue by Ian Murray, aka James Skelly's granddad. Perhaps more than any other Coral LP, it's also a record assembled from those small moments. If the overarching idea calls to mind conceptual '60s classics such as the Small Faces' *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* and *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society*, the roots of *Coral Island* are specific to both the band themselves, their past, and the area they grew up in, the seaside town of Hoylake on the Wirral Peninsula.

"Ideas like that always come into shape at 1am during dark ➤

Andrew Cotterill

◀ motorway conversations,” explains Nick Power. “We were like, Why don’t we just consolidate our experiences of growing up in a small seaside town, in the shadow of Liverpool and Wales, this no-man’s land between these two really strong magnetic forces, never a part of either of them.”

“It’s also about trying to capture an idea of the seaside that exists in our imaginations,” adds James Skelly. “I lived by the sea but mum and dad owned pubs so I also moved around a lot. I got my ideas from books and music but I was always drawn to the feel of that coastal world.” He pauses, trying to explain. “The way to sum it up is if you’ve ever heard the sound of the wind between the sails of boats in the harbour. Well to me it sounds like Joe Meek’s music, fairground music. It’s the sound of ghosts; the sound of a world between worlds. The sound of Coral Island.”

**T**HERE IS A REAL CORAL ISLAND. IT IS A GIANT, 45-year-old amusement arcade on Blackpool Promenade decorated in the style of a Moorish castle, and topped with a giant grinning pirate skull. It’s somewhere The Coral have passed, numerous times, on the road, and is almost certainly the building that gave their new album its name. However, the true roots of *Coral Island* are stranger, weirder, and exist in that world between worlds where memory, music and a certain kind of feral lawlessness unite. In the 196-page book that accompanies certain editions of the record, Nick Power writes of a place called Finniland, a seaside ghost town, rotting in the shadows of a chemical plant, that Power named after what he calls a “horrific hand-built funfair next to Finnigan’s restaurant in Hoylake... crumbling brick walls decorated with ghouls and vultures. Lots of injured children. Very League Of Gentlemen.”

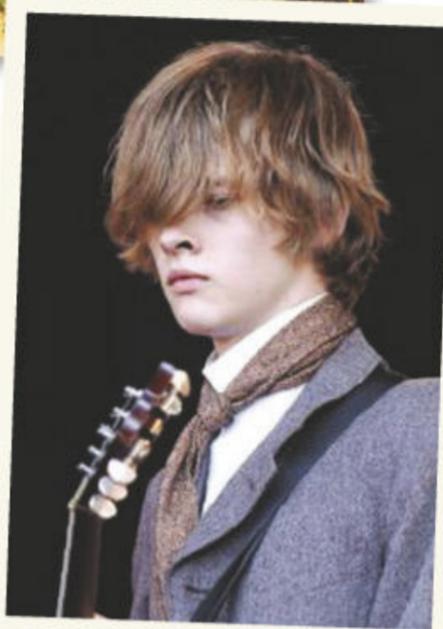
There was also The Wirral Show. “It was this fair that appeared overnight, unchecked, in the middle of a field,” explains Power. “Very Ray Bradbury. Site of multiple accidents and always the same soundtrack: Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, Del Shannon.”

“When I was a kid,” says James Skelly, “my dad had a burger van and we’d travel with the ice cream vans to The Wirral Show. I’d be there right from the beginning as they were setting up all the rides. That was magic for me. You arrived in the town and it felt like anything could happen. Candy floss and diesel. I can still smell it. Even now, if I see a poster for a fair I get the same feeling. It’s almost like a promise made.”

Although the Skelly family were based in Hoylake, they moved around a lot, managing various hostelries in the Merseyside area. “I didn’t come back to settle ’til I was 18,” explains James, “so a lot of my childhood was lived in books. In my imagination. That’s a lot of what The Coral’s about.”

It was while the Skellys were living in a pub in Wallasey that younger brother Ian formed the rudiments of what would be The Coral with school-mate and future bassist Paul Duffy. “I went to primary school with Paul,” says Ian. “He was into Madness and could play the saxophone when he was like 10.”

“My mum was a music teacher in the primary school,” explains Duffy, “so there’d always been musical instruments in the house. She put on school plays and took them *very* seriously. Ian and I were in the plays and always creative. We’d make little movies of ourselves, daft little horror movies on VHS. Then of course, Oasis came around, same time as The Beatles’ *Anthology*, so I get a big complete Beatles chord book, we’re listening to Oasis and Ian gets his big drum kit.”



Pirates on parade: (above) Blackpool’s Coral Island; (top) James Skelly, Manchester Academy, June 9, 2010; (above right) debut LP-era Coral take a walk at Hoylake, Wirral, August 20, 2002 (from left) Power, Duffy, Lee Southall, Bill Ryder-Jones, James and Ian Skelly; (insets left, from top) 2002’s debut, 2003’s *Magic And Medicine*, the new album; Ryder-Jones at Witness festival, Co. Kildare, July 12, 2003.

To a playlist of mid-’90s favourites, the pair added 2-Tone and Motown records belonging to Duffy’s dad.

“We all hung around Paul’s,” says Ian. “because we could smoke pot there. We’d go record shopping in the day and then come back. I remember one night when we played Beefheart’s *Safe As Milk* for the first time – this cartoony but dark but really colourful album... No one said anything in the room after *Electricity* finished. That was like the eureka moment for The Coral.”

“We were a weird bunch even then,” says Duffy, laughing. “Me, Ian, James, Bill [Ryder-Jones], Lee [Southall]. When we weren’t listening to records we’d just wander around West Kirby, Hoylake, get in little hidey spots like the big war monument or Thurstaston cliff tops and get stoned. Everyone else would be hanging outside offies and leisure centres. We were up on the hills looking down on the old promenade and the lighthouse, and out to sea.”

“Liverpool was on your right,” adds James Skelly, “North Wales on your left, and only the sea keeping you from both. Musically, we had Gorky’s [Zygotik Mynci] and the Super Furry Animals on one side, Shack, The La’s and the Bunnymen on the other,



**"I KIPPED ON MY YOUNGER BROTHER'S FLOOR FOR ABOUT A YEAR. I WAS HALLUCINATING, I COULDN'T REMEMBER WHERE I'D BEEN." JAMES SKELLY**

both these things being beamed at you... But there was also something else out there."

"We'd be imagining the stories written on faded promenade postcards," says Duffy. "We'd be conjuring up the old ghosts of yesterday. A little bit odd. But we are little bit odd."

**T**HE FIRST TIME THIS writer met The Coral was at a MOJO-sponsored Black Keys concert at Wilton's Music Hall in London's East End in 2008. Guitar prodigy Bill Ryder-Jones had just left the group for a second time, citing mental exhaustion (he has since built a career as a brilliant solo singer-songwriter), and the rest of the group looked dead on their feet, cloaked behind a security-fog of heavy skunk weed and wary of industry interlopers unless they were happy to talk about Dion and Del Shannon. Since the release of their first single, the ghost-ska ballroom incantation of *Shadows Fall*, they had been hailed as "Scouse" heirs to Oasis, part of a guitar-group revival alongside The Libertines and fellow Merseysiders The Zutons. Their debut LP had gone platinum in the UK, while their second, *Magic And Medicine*, knocked Beyoncé off the Number 1 spot. 2005's *The Invisible Invasion*, produced by Portishead's Geoff Barrow and Adrian Utley, reached Number 3. Celebrity fans included Noel Gallagher and Paul Weller, who declared 2007's *Roots & Echoes* one of the albums of the year. On paper, they seemed unassailable. In reality, they were a mess, on the wrong road, and heading for a crash that had been waiting up ahead for a long time.

"Right from the start, we suffered from Holden Caulfield Syndrome," says James Skelly. "If you start from the presumption that everyone else in the media is a fake, you've put yourself in a corner, haven't you? And if you smoke that much skunk you're incapable of interacting with anyone. You're lazy. You're totally paranoid and

because you're insecure you don't want anyone to know you, because you're not *you* yet."

Very early on, James Skelly was expected to be the face and the spokesperson for this new wave of guitar bands, a next-gen Gallagher for the 21st century.

"I didn't want that responsibility! This lad who read M.R. James and Edgar Allan Poe expected to do

the 'Manc walk'. I remember our manager, Alan [Wills] talking about Bob Dylan. I was like, 'He's the greatest.' He said, 'Yeah, but would you *want* it? Every day? To be that?' Every time I do well now, I tell myself that it's not the most important thing in the world. When I think it's the most important thing in the world I can't even function."

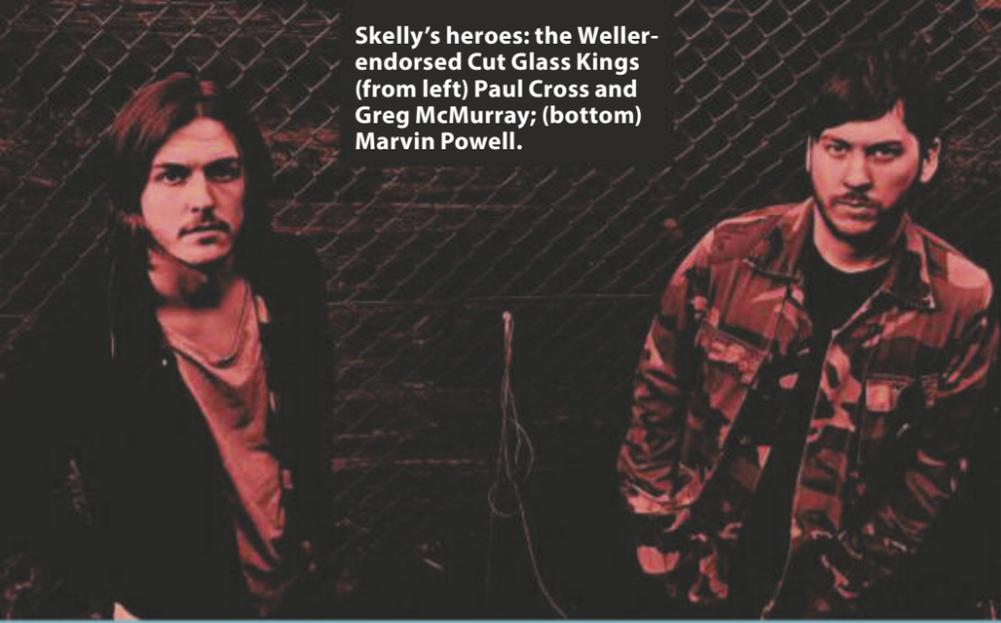
As a coping mechanism, the group would be drawn to acts of self-sabotage, refusing to go along with the requests of their record label, or music magazines.

"I'd grown up in pubs," says James, "around people who'd say, 'I'm not doing that, bring it to me.' You know, having it all on your own terms. The trouble with your own terms, I now realise, is you end up on your own."

James still views with regret the final departure of Ryder-Jones in 2008 and guitarist Lee Southall in 2015, because, he says, "they were younger than me and I felt I had to protect them. There was that constant worry: 'I can't let this get out of hand. Because there's no way back.' In the end, though, it just grinds you down. I now think Bill should have left earlier. The problem was, we didn't really have a solid management team. We had Alan Wills. It was like lunatics running the asylum."

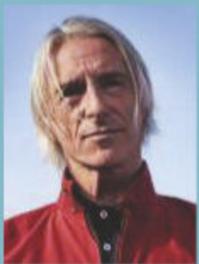
Wills, a former drummer with Shack, had first seen The Coral play live after spotting a poster designed by Ian Skelly, depicting grandad Ian's head exploding. It was Wills who set up Delta- ➤

Skelly's heroes: the Weller-endorsed Cut Glass Kings (from left) Paul Cross and Greg McMurray; (bottom) Marvin Powell.



# "I'M A BIG FAN OF THE WHOLE SCENE"

Paul Weller's guide to The Coral, James Skelly's Skeleton Key label, and their wider world.



I'm continually amazed at the amount of talent that comes out of that little area, out of the Wirral. I know it's a big generalisation, but Liverpool is

a music city. And it's not just their talent but their knowledge. I'm always amazed at how much these young musicians know about the music that's come before. I'm a big fan of the whole scene.

The Coral have been one of my favourites from the first time I heard *Shadows Fall* [from *The Coral*, 2002]. The musicality, even on that first album, was fucking outstanding. And the last album: *Move Through The Dawn* [2018]. Go and listen to that track, *Eyes Of The Moon* – it's up there with their best work.

More power to James Skelly. He's a great writer – we've written this song together, *Crow Boy*, a bonus track on *Fat Pop* – and I love the sound of his voice, but what he's done with his label, Skeleton Key, is amazing. Like Marvin Powell's *Dust Of The Day* [2019] – I love the whole album, man, but my favourite track is *The Wind Before The Train*. It's like something that could have been on the old pink Island label.

The Fernweh's *Next Time Around* [from *The Fernweh*, 2018] – I love that track. In the melody and the chords there's a sense of how it could almost be a 1930s, '40s sort of tune. And *Cut Glass Kings* are a great little band – they're from Stourbridge but they're

on Skeleton Key. Check out *Dream In The Dark* [from *Cut Glass Kings*, 2019]. I suppose you'd call them garage rock – they love fuzz! – but also they're writing great little rock'n'roll tunes, and there's not a lot of that around. Plenty of rock. Not enough roll.

Finally, The Mysterines aren't from the Wirral or on Skeleton Key but they're managed by James and Ian Skelly's brother Alfie Skelly – a great kid. Lia Metcalfe is on a track called *True* on my

new album. She came down to Black Barn to record it and wrote most of the lyrics. But their song *Gasoline* [from their *Take Control* EP, 2019] is really powerful. Ones to watch!

You know, I say to my Scouse mates, it's always a bit intimidating playing in

Liverpool, 'cos there are so many great musicians. You look into the audience and think, Any one of these probably sings and plays guitar better than me! D'you know what I mean?

"I SAY TO MY SCOUSE MATES, IT'S ALWAYS A BIT INTIMIDATING PLAYING IN LIVERPOOL."



sonic Records with his partner Ann Heston, in order to promote The Coral. A joint venture deal with Sony Records, who owned 49 per cent of the label, Deltasonic became home to other promising Merseyside groups including The Zutons, The Dead 60s, The Bandits, The Stands, and Tramp Attack, while Wills assumed the role of manager and cultural guru to his young charges.

"Alan told us to get off the Liverpool club circuit, lock ourselves away for a year and write some good tunes," says Ian. "He kind of gave us that licence to combine Lee 'Scratch' Perry and The Mills Brothers, add Four Freshmen harmonies with a mad ska beat."

"He made us watch Jim Jarmusch films," adds Nick Power, "and he also gave me the Sam Shepard book, *Motel Chronicles*, which was a massive influence on my writing and on *Coral Island*. He introduced us to this other world. The flip side was, there was no one stepping in to say, 'Enough with the drugs.' The weed we were smoking was straight off the Bootle docks. It was like bloody LSD. Willsy would be saying, 'You're in a movie now! This is all a movie!' That and the drugs, it gave you a detachment from the real world and that's what caused all the problems later on."

Even though there have been graver incidents of rock'n'roll mischief in the history of The Coral – like the time they got themselves banned from the Isle Of Man – these days James Skelly prefers to relate a more pitiful tale.

"Bill had just decided to stop touring, around the time of [2005]'s *Invisible Invasion*," he says. "Me and Nick were in this stinking flat above this pub, just getting shit-faced. Andy Rourke and Mike Joyce were playing there with this guy called Vinny Peculiar and I remember them walking out of the pub and I was just throwing bread at them out the pub window. *That's* the moment I look back on. Why? Because it's so pathetic. I mean, there's defiance in getting kicked off the Isle Of Man but throwing slices of bread at The Smiths' rhythm section? That's low. I had nothing left."

The band now admit they were in chaos between *Invisible Invasion* and 2007's *Roots & Echoes*, while conceding that they were also creating some of their best work.

"Yeah, on paper it all looks fine," says Paul Duffy. "But it was a mess. I was just anxious and worried all the time. I remember walking to the rehearsal room during *Curse Of Love* [the 'lost' album recorded after *Invisible Invasion* but not released until 2014] and just feeling dread. You could sense it in the room. We weren't psychiatrists, you're not going to 'reach out' to each other, and we wouldn't know what to say anyway, but it was coming through in the music: 'We can't handle it, we can't handle it.'"

A major regroup came with *Butterfly House*, during which the band re-emerged with a new sense of purpose. Then came a meeting with Sony.

"They were all, 'This is great. This is great. We love it. We're dropping you,'" says James Skelly. "I didn't really care by that stage. I just thought, the tunes will find a way."

"I remember the Butterfly House tour," says Duffy. "I just kept telling myself, 'It'll be fine. It'll be fine. James is the leader.' I just expected this one guy to sort it all out."

"I ended up paying for some of that tour," says James, "and afterwards it was like, 'Fuck, there's no money left. It's gone.' In a way, I knew and Nick knew we needed to stop this train."

"James said, 'We can either make a record and be absolutely broke or stop and divide up what's left,'" says Duffy. "Absolute panic! Suddenly that sense of security has been torn from you. I have to fend for myself? *How?* I've got no GCSEs! I don't know how to do spreadsheets!"

"I think everyone was hurt and scared," says James. Yet the group slowly realised a hiatus could be the positive move. "From that moment," the singer asserts, "The Coral were in charge."

THE CORAL CEASED TO FUNCTION AS AN ACTIVE group between 2012 to 2015. "That was a rude awakening," says Ian Skelly, laughing. "Back to playing in covers bands in crappy little bars, people coming up to me going, 'Weren't you in The Coral?' But it was an education. It's what we all needed."

Little by little, new music started to come. Ian Skelly formed



**"JAMES SAID, WE CAN EITHER MAKE A RECORD AND BE ABSOLUTELY BROKE OR STOP AND DIVIDE UP WHAT'S LEFT. ABSOLUTE PANIC!" PAUL DUFFY**

**"We're not dealing in nostalgia...": The Coral in the pavilion of their mind, February 2021 (clockwise from top left) Paul Duffy, Paul Molloy, James Skelly, Nick Power and Ian Skelly; (bottom) an Ian Skelly illustration from Nick Power's Coral Island book.**

harmony-psych duo Serpent Power with former Skylarks and Zutons guitarist Paul Molloy, James Skelly launched his Skeleton Key label and gathered members of the band together for his wistful 2013 solo album, *Love Undercover*, while Paul Duffy developed an interest in soundtracks and began recording with Manchester singer-songwriter Ren Harvieu. Nick Power, meanwhile, released 2017's under-the-radar concept album, *Caravan* – about a man getting his life back together in a seaside static caravan park – and published his poetry plus a Coral tour diary titled *Into The Void*. Like the rest of the band, Power also found himself coming to terms with the unexpected death of Alan Wills, following a cycling accident in 2014.

"It was devastating," says Power. "And really hard to deal with because we weren't together as a band at the time. It just filtered in slowly. It was something so big. Like our youth had just been yanked away."

As its crew gradually righted themselves, so, eventually, did the mothership. 2016's comeback Coral LP, *Distance Inbetween*, showcased the new-found live power of the group (thanks in part to the addition of Paul Molloy on guitar). 2018's *Move Through The Dawn* was a semi-conceptual take on a radio-friendly pop album.

Both were steps forward, but *Coral Island* is the giant leap. If it sounds like it lives and

breathes, that was the intention. "Most of it was recorded on a little quarter-inch tape machine," explains James Skelly. "We wanted it to sound like an old seaside postcard or photograph, sometimes broken, sometimes scratched."

But if *Coral Island* is a relic, it's of a place and time that never existed. "We're not dealing in nostalgia," says the singer. "It might be escapism, but there's nothing wrong with escapism. I think you can sometimes see the world clearer when you leave it."

Yet James Skelly never left it, not completely. Even at his worst moments, he insists, he did not seriously consider splitting The Coral.

"Never," he says. "I was brought up with a great responsibility towards family. My grandad and my nan had five kids and my auntie had spina bifida and was in a wheelchair. She never complained. They were happy. Whenever my grandad had to go on work nights, or mom and dad had to work at a pub we'd all look after each other. We'd always be there for each other." **M**



# FREE YOUR ASS!



*Maggot Brain* was **FUNKADELIC** guru George Clinton's acid-drenched vision of a black psych apocalypse, but it fell to his hyper-talented junkie guitarist Eddie Hazel to give it soul. After its July 1971 manifestation, rock, funk, and Funkadelic themselves, were never the same. As Clinton told MOJO's **KRIS NEEDS**, "I guess we really did get loony and didn't know it."

Portrait by: **PETER STONE**



IT'S A LATE 1970 EVENING AT DETROIT'S UNITED Sound studio and the drug divide within Funkadelic is widening. As work starts on their third album, producer George Clinton and guitarist Eddie Hazel are flying on potent yellow sunshine LSD while the rhythm section are nodding on heroin.

Yet Clinton hears something in a haunting chord sequence being trundled at funereal tempo by guitarist Tawl Ross and bassist Billy Nelson. His acid-bubbling brain starts envisioning a mournful eulogy: for departed souls, darkening times and a utopian hippy dream soured by conflicts in Vietnam and America's inner cities. Clinton cues in Eddie Hazel, the mercurial guitarist believed to carry some of Jimi Hendrix's spirit even before the latter's recent death, knowing he only has to brush Hazel's emotional hair-trigger to send his performance into the stratosphere.

Having surrounded the guitarist with Marshall stacks, Clinton bombards him with worst case scenarios, hitting home when he tells Hazel to imagine his mother has just died. Lacing his Stratocaster with fuzz box and Crybaby wah wah, Hazel unleashes an astonishing 10-minute reverie from his fragile, acid-wired soul, nailing the "spirituality of despair" Clinton is hoping for. "When he started playing, I knew immediately that he understood what I meant," recalled Clinton later. "I could see the guitar notes stretching out like a silver web. When we played the solo back, ➤

Funkadelic, their Ass following, just banned from Royal Albert Hall (behind), London, May 4, 1971. The donkey is Fluff; George Clinton lolls bootless.





Can you get to that: (from left) 1968 band with Billy Nelson (left), Eddie Hazel (seated front), Tiki Fulwood (second right); Clinton on the warpath, New York, 1969; (below) The Parliaments, late '50s; Lucius 'Tawl' Ross; Ramon 'Tiki' Fulwood; Eddie Hazel; (inset, opposite) *Maggot Brain* sleeve.



◀ I knew that it was good beyond good, not only a virtuoso display of musicianship but also an unprecedented moment of emotion in pop music.”

To emphasise Hazel's stellar performance, Clinton pared back the accompaniment. “I had four baby junkies who decided to go to sleep right there on the session. I had to make a record out of whatever I got. But the rest of the band sounded like shit! So I faded they ass right the fuck out.”

Taking Hazel's nickname, *Maggot Brain*, Clinton now had a title and a transcendent concept to ignite his work-in-progress: the fulfilment of Funkadelic as “a black rock group playing the loudest, funkier culmination of psychedelic rock and thunderous R&B.”

**R**ELEASED IN JULY 1971, *MAGGOT BRAIN* CARRIES THE darkest mythology in the P-Funk cosmos. Some even said the title came from Clinton's discovery of his OD'd brother Robert's decomposed body in a Chicago apartment, his cracked head inspiring the screaming zombie female and skull of the album's front and back covers. A story Clinton would later dismiss.

“Ha ha ha! It wasn't that gory at all,” he laughed during an interview with this writer in 1989. Behind a desk in Warner Brothers' New York boardroom, Clinton was celebrating signing to Prince's Paisley Park label. His face beaming from beneath multicoloured dreadlocks, he remembered *Maggot Brain* as a drug-stoked watershed before Funkadelic's first line-up disintegrated, explaining, “We had to realise that our minds, which we thought would bring a solution to all the problems, were fucked up themselves.”

Born in Kannapolis, North Carolina but raised in Plainfield, New Jersey, Clinton had envisioned Funkadelic as a groundbreaking black rock'n'roll band early in their gestation backing his vocal group The Parliaments. The latter's early 1967 hit on the Revilot label, (I Wanna) Testify, had been recorded in Detroit at the end of Clinton's stint as a writer-producer on the Motown payroll, while back in Plainfield, the Silk Palace barbershop he co-owned had become a notorious hub for like-minded musicians and local crazies. It was Billy Nelson who introduced Clinton to Brooklyn-born Hazel, then playing sessions in nearby Newark. Ironically, Hazel's mother had moved them to Plainfield to avoid drugs.

Nelson's recruits already included his guitar teacher, Lucius 'Tawl' Ross, and after sharing a bill in Philadelphia, veteran soul drummer Ramon 'Tiki' Fulwood was enlisted. As the expanded Parliaments replaced soul band suits with man-sized diapers, superfly street clobber, joke shop duck feet and, for Clinton, a hotel sheet slashed with a hole for his Mohican-topped head, their radical transformation was



climbed by prodigious LSD use.

“I guess we really did get loony and didn't know it,” reflected Clinton. “I knew we made a big step. We came out of the ghetto, where you got to watch your back about everything. Now here I'm gonna take something that ain't got no reality to hold onto whatsoever, but it felt good. It was a permanent smile on

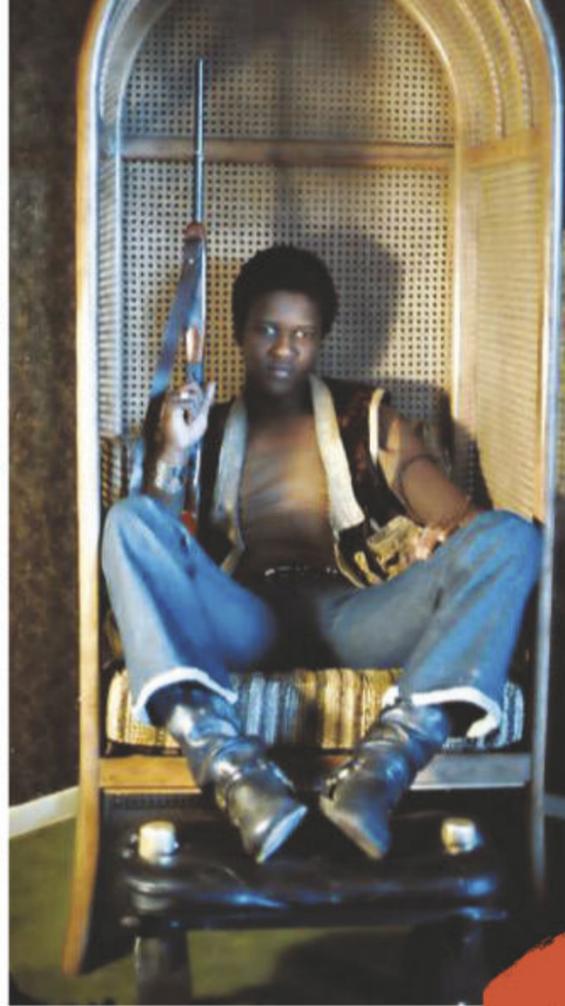
my face. I don't regret nothing I did, if I did it. I try to find out what's the best lesson I can learn from it.”

The rock infusion amped up after Vanilla Fudge supported The Parliaments at a Connecticut college. When their equipment was delayed, Clinton's band borrowed the Fudge's Marshall stacks and, within weeks, boasted the same setup. Moving to Detroit during the riots of late July '67, The Parliaments embraced the Motor City's radical rock scene, sharing bills, drugs and an agent with Mitch Ryder and The Stooges. “Motherfuckers could get crazy without nobody paying them too much mind so we fitted right in,” said Clinton, who recalled concocting a story with Iggy for the local press that the pair were getting married.

“We were kindred spirits with the rock bands... We went directly into rock, and we flourished,” said Clinton later. “In Detroit, we were even hotter than Sly. We were like The Beatles there, the hip thing everyone knew was coming.”

**W**ITH THE PARLIAMENTS NAME EMBROIDERED IN a contractual dispute involving the now-bankrupt Revilot, Clinton brought the backing band forward with The Parliaments “guesting”. Detroit distributor Armen Boladian's Westbound Records released Funkadelic's first 45s – the eerie hoo-doo of Music For My Mother and coruscating I'll Bet You (the turquoise labels announcing them as “A Parliafunkadelicment Thang”) – then March 1970's self-titled debut album. Lashed with scorching guitars, stoned soul vocals, booming funk grooves and mixing desk trickery, it recast black music for the new decade, Clinton declaring “We gonna be the blackest, we gonna be the funkier, we gonna be the dirtiest...”

During sessions, moonlighting Motown session men stepped in when the rhythm section mutinied over money. Most significantly, conservatory-educated Bernie Worrell joined on keyboards, further enabling Clinton's progressive rock aspirations. “*Funkadelic* was the beginning of our psychedelic era,” he said. “Jimi Hendrix was the king of it at that time. When I knew him as Jimmy James, he wasn't playing like that. Then he went over to England and did *Are You Experienced*. ‘Holy shit! He's doin' it!’ We was already



**"I COULD SEE THE GUITAR NOTES STRETCHING OUT LIKE A SILVER WEB. I KNEW THAT IT WAS GOOD BEYOND GOOD."**  
**GEORGE CLINTON**

doing it slightly ourselves anyway."

Funkadelic's sales were strong enough to justify an instant follow-up: July's breakthrough *Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow*. Clinton saw it as his *Sgt. Pepper*, an exercise in musical audacity. "That was *blatantly* psychedelic!" he told me in 1989. "We just said, 'Let's go all the way crazy; let's see if we can record a whole album while we're tripping on acid!' I made it up on the spot, recorded and mixed in one day, acid-ed out of my mind."

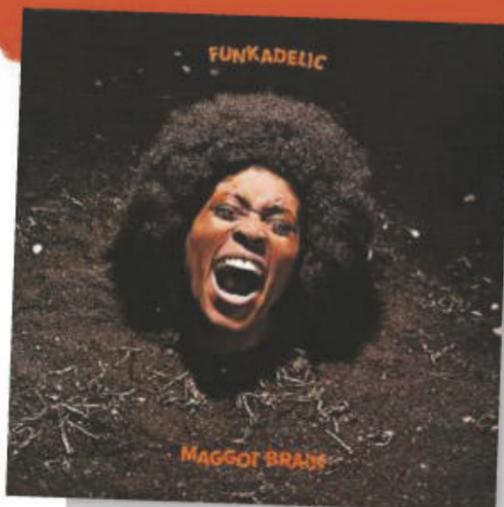
Notably, it was the first of many albums recorded at Detroit's venerable United Sound Studio, which would remain Clinton's "P-Funk lab" into the '80s. "We were playing stuff in the studio that the engineer didn't even want his name on," continued Clinton. "You turned on a Funkadelic record with earphones on, drums running across your head, panning the foot, we panned everything. Matter of fact, you didn't even have to be high to get into that."

Running at only 32 minutes, *Free Your Mind...* was bookended by a mind-blowing title track that subverted Christian themes into acid-funk ritual, and the bizarre Eulogy And Light, offering a pimp's-eye rewrite of The Lord's Prayer over Funkadelic gospel track Open Your Eyes run backwards, offering thanks to "the Good God Big Buck".

**A**FTER *FREE YOUR MIND...* PEAKED AT 92 ON Billboard's albums chart, Clinton admitted its daring cross-pollination of rock and R&B was destined to confuse media and public both: "It's not strictly rock and roll, it's not strictly rhythm and blues. It's everything."

In 2014, his view had not changed. "When we started doing Funkadelic we were too black for white folks and too white for black folks," he told me. "But the fans that liked us stayed close to us."

1970 was Clinton's pivotal year, creatively. The Beatles, Hendrix and Dylan had already changed the way he thought about music, but he credited Eric Clapton's Cream with reintroducing him to Robert Johnson and the blues. "Cream taught me all about that," Clinton told me. "What got me the most was I found out about Robert Johnson from them and *I'm the black guy!* The reason was it was the kind of music older folks like my mother used to listen to, and kids don't like listening to their parents' music. When I heard Eric Clap-



ton explaining who Robert Johnson was I felt like *shit* for not knowing this stuff already."

However, Funkadelic would pay a commercial price for their mainman's epiphany. As Clinton recalled: "The radio stations said to us, 'You're black so you can't do blues or rock'n'roll.'"

With accidental synchronicity, The Parliaments returned that July with *Osmium* after Clinton signed them to Holland-Dozier-Holland's Invictus. Changing the name to Parliament, he was serving them Funkadelic in disguise, a contractual bigamy that launched the P-Funk empire.

One of the more curious outings in Clinton's catalogue, *Osmium* further confused a public wrestling with *Free Your Mind...*, with stinging funk-rock missiles like Nothing Before Me But Thang joined by surreal curios such as Little Ole Country Boy's hillbilly romp and the bagpipe-garnished Silent Boatman. These oddities were written by producer Jeffrey Bowen's wife Ruth Copeland (see MOJO 262), a talented singer-

songwriter from Consett, County Durham, who would be backed by Funkadelic on her *Self Portrait* album released that October.

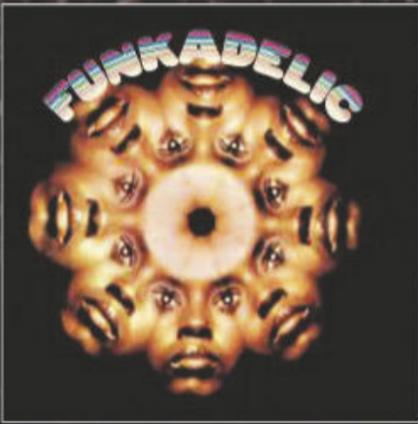
But if the baffling, scattershot scope of Parliafunkadelicment had yet to achieve traction, that didn't seem to bother Clinton. In fact, he was about to double down.

**R**ECORDED AT UNITED SOUND, *MAGGOT BRAIN* was Clinton's kiss-off to the idealistic hippy epoch. "To me, Woodstock was the end of that whole era because it all became so commercial," he told me. "Drugs even became commercial – watch out for the brown acid! Before that, acid was just coming out from the colleges and things were all pretty much straightforward for everyone. But after Woodstock you had strychnine, PCP and everything that kind of got you fuzzy in the head. So that, for me, was the end of all that period of peace and love. The peace part the kids still believed in, but the system took it all over and co-opted it – and that's how the bad stuff gets in."

One of the victims of the bad stuff was Eddie Hazel. In 1970 he was still at his peak – his playing a blend of fiery virtuosity and magical sensitivity. But he had only recently cemented his 'Maggot Brain' handle with a drug deal outside a Funkadelic gig in ➤

# AXE ATTACKS

TEN FUNKADELIC FRETBOARD FREAKOUTS, MIXED BY KRIS NEEDS AND DANNY ECCLESTON.



## I'LL BET YOU

from *Funkadelic* (Westbound, 1970)

Although covered by The Jackson 5 in 1970, Clinton had already thrown this old school soul taunt into Funkadelic's bubbling lysergic cauldron, becoming their second single after Eddie Hazel forged the band's first heavy riff – blood-curdling screams greeting his attitude-charged solo. *KN*

## I WANNA KNOW IF IT'S GOOD TO YOU?

from *Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow* (Westbound, 1971)



Super-stoked by its carnal chant, Hazel's inner Hendrix reared over Billy Nelson's radioactive throb with the priapic

wah wah motif that earned a composing credit, his solo rising from watery moan to lascivious uproar (further highlighted on the 45 version's instrumental B-side). *KN*

## SUPER STUPID

from *Maggot Brain* (Westbound, 1971)

Angelic intro, demonic riff: the two faces of heroin in one monstrous song, with Hazel again leading the way – although Tawl Ross is no slouch either – while shakers outline a skeletal boogie. The fade can barely suppress the axe freakery. *DE*

## MAGGOT BRAIN

from *Live* (Westbound, 1996)



You've just sparked up a monster 'doobie' at Meadowbrook in Rochester, Michigan on September 12,

1971 as the soon-to-quit Hazel lays on you his soul-stripping elegy. For 14 minutes. Newbie drummer Tyrone Lampkin sounds just as unnerved, frankly. *DE*

## MISS LUCIFER'S LOVE

from *America Eats Its Young* (Westbound, 1972)



America... is a grab-bag of transitional Funkadelic line-ups. Guitarist Garry

Shider and Bootsy and Phelps Collins are bedding in, but here the fuzz-wah vocalese and sky-scraping perma-soloing could only come from one man's plectrum. It's Eddie Hazel. *DE*

## COSMIC SLOP

from *Cosmic Slop* (Westbound, 1973)



Clinton's bleak spiritual hymn about a hustling ghetto mother begging forgiveness inspired Garry

Shider's finest vocal, multiple guitars from Detroit heavyweight Ron Bykowski and Shider wailing from the tenements like lost souls over Bootsy's (uncredited) coiled-spring riff. *KN*

## GOOD THOUGHTS, BAD THOUGHTS

from *Standing On The Verge Of Getting It On* (Westbound, 1974)



Verge was Hazel's official return to the Funkadelic fold after his *Invictus* trip, and this his nine-minute brown study. Lyrical

curlicues shimmer and deliquesce while Clinton imparts spiritual mumbo-jumbo in a comical basso profundo. "Bullshit thoughts rot your meat" – dig? *DE*

## GET OFF YOUR ASS AND JAM

from *Let's Take It To The Stage* (Westbound, 1975)



With Hazel incarcerated, Rare Earth guitarist Paul Warren was paid 50 dollars to overdub the squalling guitar

accompanying a popular P-Funk stage chant in one of Funkadelic's most blatant rock onslaughts (his lacerating intro later looped in Public Enemy's *Bring The Noise*). *KN*

## I WANT YOU (SHE'S SO HEAVY)

from *Eddie Hazel – Games, Dames And Guitar Thangs* (Warner Bros, 1977)



Even constructed from outtakes and covers, Hazel's one solo LP dazzled with an astonishing liquid virtuosity to earn the

Hendrix comparisons. Lennon's epic *Abbey Road* catharsis inspired one of his greatest flights, ingeniously ascending the stratosphere over nine mesmerising minutes. *KN*

## WHO SAYS A FUNK BAND CAN'T PLAY ROCK?

from *One Nation Under A Groove* (Warner Bros, 1978)



By this time Parliament and Funkadelic were sharing the proprietary bounce we think of as the

P-Funk sound. But 'Throbbasonic Funkgeetarists' Garry Shider and Michael Hampton still blaze on the saw-toothed riff and, from halfway, almost constant soloing. Relentlessly catchy. *DE*

◀ Boston – an anecdote immortalised in the *Maggot Brain* track *Super Stupid*. "Super Stupid bought a nickel bag," ran Clinton's lyric. "Thought it was coke but it was skag."

But Hazel's wild riffing on the track sounds anything but gouched out. "Eddie was a really funny guy, always laughing," says his friend the drummer Jerome 'Bigfoot' Brailey. "But he was also real sensitive. He would just break down and start crying for no reason. He wasn't ego'd-out about playing. He was really soulful."

The guitarist was not the only volatile element in *Maggot Brain*'s chemistry. Loud conflict erupted during the sessions, as Bernie Worrell was forced to moderate between bassist – and supposed bandleader – Billy Nelson's drug-fuelled "short man rage" (as Clinton called it) and older Parliaments Grady Thomas, Fuzzy Haskins, Calvin Simon and Ray Davis. Musically, too, it was Worrell's job to add sensitivity to proceedings, just as his scintillating jazz organ leavens *Hit It Or Quit It*'s proto-metal bombast. "Bernie was a musical genius," Clinton explained. "With Bernie we could paint with more colours... Bernie could take any groove and make it Beethoven, Bach or any jazz thing you want it to be."

The music Funkadelic unleashed on *Maggot Brain* sounded like its title. It wriggled with ideas: some ecstatic, some seemingly random, some disturbing. In its final form, the trip begins with Clinton intoning, "Mother Earth is pregnant for the third time/For y'all have knocked her up" as Tawl Ross's gentle chords lay a ghostly bed for the melancholy majesty of Hazel's entry. It ends in the tradition of insane Funkadelic album closers, with *Wars Of Armageddon* addressing America's psychic investment in war over its surging guitar mayhem, and a *Revolution 9*-like collage including sirens, cows, screams, orgasms and robust flatulence: "all-out psychedelia", as Clinton would later note. "What had been an implication before," he added, "was now a masterplan."

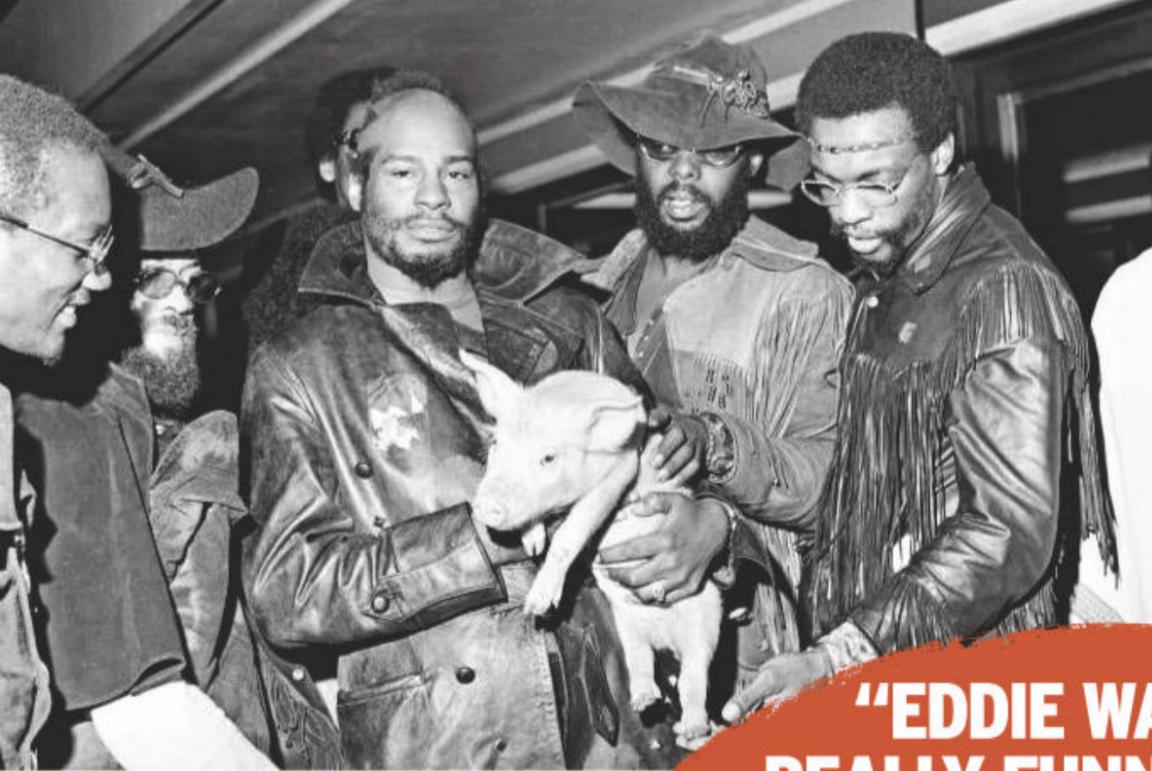
Clinton wanted *Maggot Brain*'s cover to match the music's dark affront, first considering a pearl-fanged female vampire looming over squeezed-out tampons before conceding, "It was a bit extreme, even for us!"

Apocalyptic sleeve notes quoted The Process Church Of The Final Judgement sect, as would some forthcoming P-Funk albums. Originally a controversial Scientology splinter group started in the mid-'60s, the Process Church believed they were visionaries warning of the coming apocalypse, inevitably drawing Manson comparisons. But it was hard to separate acid-fuelled Clinton mischief from genuine evangelism, and some said the 'Process' referred to the hair straightening-services provided by his Plainfield barbershop.

**F**UNKADELIC HAD GIGGED THROUGH 1970'S intense recording schedule. In October's *Creem* magazine Geoffrey Jacques described a typical show: "When the Parliament/Funkadelic trample on stage, everything is suddenly transformed. It's just like hearing rock and roll or John Coltrane for the first time... The bizarre act is attacked with an almost religious fervour, as if you were witnessing a service at a store-front sanctified church... George Clinton has been known to bound into the crowd, Red Indian headdress streaming after him, and emerge wearing nothing more than a scarlet jockstrap."

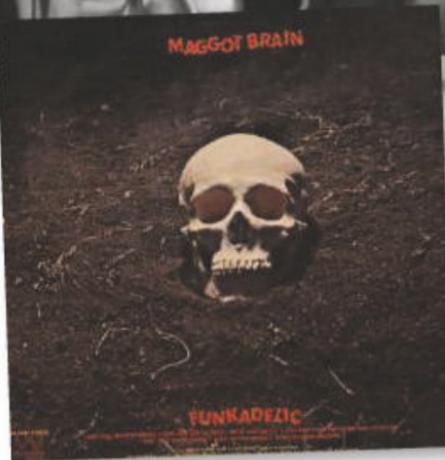
With *Maggot Brain* finished, the band toured UK colleges and clubs in May 1971. Clinton's self-described "freaked-out, psychedelically wrecked black rock'n'rollers" horrified soul fans expecting (*I Wanna*) Testify, while their scantily-clad antics made waves after they headlined over the Groundhogs at the Lincoln Festival.

The band relished their first time in the UK, posing for *Maggot Brain*'s inner sleeve photo in Liverpool after visiting its Beatles landmarks and hitting London's hip boutiques, but it was not without hitch. Having cancelled a *Mothers Of Invention* show in February on the strength of their lewd lyrics, the Royal Albert Hall pulled Funkadelic after manager Marian Herrod saw *Free Your Mind...*'s album cover. Accompanied by press photographers, the band duly turned up at the nearby Albert Memorial with a hired donkey, who defecated on its steps, joined by Clinton's pet pig Mr Dibbles. After the Lyceum also balked, Funkadelic played London gigs at the



**"EDDIE WAS A REALLY FUNNY GUY, ALWAYS LAUGHING. BUT HE WAS ALSO REAL SENSITIVE. HE WOULD JUST BREAK DOWN AND START CRYING FOR NO REASON."**

**JEROME 'BIGFOOT' BRAILEY**



Telling porkies: (above, from left) the band admire Clinton's Mr Dibbles; The Process Church of the Final Judgement, Cambridge, MA, 1973. The establishment's proclamations would influence the tenor of Funkadelic and Parliament sleeve notes. Or not; (insets) guitar seer Eddie Hazel; *Maggot Brain's* back sleeve.

Speakeasy, the Country Club, and the Roundhouse in Camden. "Even now in America we're not fully accepted," Clinton told the UK's *Disc & Music Echo*. "People are still analysing us. That's what's great about Britain: nobody tries to analyse us, they just dig the music."

Stalling at 108 in the Billboard albums chart, *Maggot Brain* marked the last time the original Funkadelic creatively combusted in the studio. Already upset that a payrise request by the younger Funkadelic musicians had been rejected, Billy 'Bass' Nelson quit when Clinton made Bernie Worrell musical director. Joining him in a move to Los Angeles to work with Invictus acts including Chairmen Of The Board, and later The Temptations, was his friend and fellow junkie Eddie Hazel.

Then, before Clinton could fire him – ostensibly for his heroin use – 'Tiki' Fulwood was headhunted by Miles Davis.

"We were at Paul's Mall [in Boston]," recalled Bernie Worrell. "We had just come off and Miles walked in, stood in the middle of the doorway, didn't say a word, just stared. You know those eyes of his when he stared at you; that shit go right through you. Ain't nobody say nothing. He just looked, then turned and left. Next day, Tiki was gone."

If Fulwood and Hazel, even Nelson, would return, on and off, Tawl Ross would not. In Rob Bowman's sleeve note for *Music For Your Mother: Funkadelic 45s*, Nelson recalled the night in Canada when Ross swallowed six tabs of yellow sunshine before snorting multiple lines of industrial-strength methedrine. "He was hallucinating so bad that I could see the hallucinations," recalled Nelson. "I could see him sitting in the hotel room talking to his mother, who had been dead for at least seven or eight years. I had a little acid in myself so I could actually see what he was seeing... leaning over a coffin talking to his mother and his mother leaning out of the coffin talking back to him... When we got to that gig Tawl was totally out of it and he stayed that way."

**A**S ROSS BECAME P-FUNK'S SYD BARRETT FIGURE, silent until his gently hallucinogenic 1995 solo album, *Giant Shirley*, Clinton directed his ever-expanding Parliafunkadelicment army until eventually breaking into the

commercial stratosphere with 1975's *Mothership Connection*. The ensuing Earth tour took a spectacular show to 20,000-capacity arenas normally filled by rock's biggest bands.

By the early 1980s, however, Clinton's empire had buckled under its own weight and his own addiction to crack cocaine. He would periodically reinvent himself, and his musical vehicles, before regrouping the Parliament-Funkadelic ensemble as the P-Funk All Stars, thereby sidestepping the latest legal issues, in 1983. During the three subsequent decades he has become celebrated as one of music's great characters and innovators, an international treasure.

Eddie Hazel continued to contribute to albums by both Funkadelic and Parliament franchises, notably on the former's *Standing On The Verge Of Getting It On* and the latter's *Up For The Down Stroke* (both 1974). Later that year, after smoking PCP on a flight to Los Angeles, Hazel freaked out – claiming to have seen UFOs out the window – and assaulted cabin crew. Arrested and subsequently jailed for a year, he was replaced, by Clinton, with guitarist Michael Hampton.

In 1977, Hazel released his only solo album, *Games, Dames And Guitar Thangs*. An influence on artists as diverse as John Frusciante, Primal Scream and Ween, Hazel died in 1992 of liver failure after years of drug and alcohol abuse.

"The truly genius are like that, they're tormented," said Clinton's early collaborator and lifelong friend Sidney Barnes. "He had too many demons."

Fifty years on, Eddie Hazel's spirit still courses through the album that is his namesake. In your writer's quarter-century interviewing George Clinton, the few times his mood dipped from worldly-wise effervescence was at mention of Hazel's name. Other interviewers found the same.

"Ah, Mr Maggot Brain," he told John Corbett, two years after Hazel's death. "He just felt everything. His music will be here forever."

# THE NEW ART SCHOOL



**BILL SMITH DESIGNED THE JAM'S RECORD SLEEVES FROM *IN THE CITY* TO ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, WITH THE AID OF SOME BATHROOM TILES AND A DOG CALLED MAX. "IT WAS AN AWFUL LOT OF FUN," HE TELLS DANNY ECCLESTON.**

**F**ROM THE MOMENT Polydor art director Bill Smith saw The Jam on-stage, at the Greyhound in Fulham, he could see the cover of their debut album, *In The City*, in his mind's eye. "I had this story in my head," he tells MOJO today. "The Jam were being chased by a rival band or gang, and they'd hidden in this underground toilet, where they spray-painted their logo."

Since underground toilets are not ideal photographic locations, Smith and snapper Martyn Goddard built one in the studio: "So the morning of the shoot me and Martyn put up these two two-metre by one-metre boards and tiled them ourselves." Smith sprayed the logo in one go. "I can't remember having a plan of what it would look like," he says. "Luckily it turned out all right – imagine if I'd messed it up?"

After the group had been photographed in front of Smith's creation, he took a hammer to it: "I said to Martyn, I'm going to be one of the rival gang or band and I've just seen their logo and I'm gonna smash it up. So I knocked it about a bit, and we shot it with the three shadows on it, and that was the back cover."

For three concentrated years, Smith was responsible for all Jam record sleeves. They take pride of place in *Cover Stories*, a new, richly annotated collection of his cover art that includes quirky, arresting work for Genesis, The Cure, King Crimson and Sique Sique Sputnik. Yet his relationship with The Jam was formative and featured increasing input from Paul Weller. "For *Setting Sons*, Paul explained his concept – of these three school friends who go to war," says Smith. Photographer Andrew Douglas agreed that a statue of soldiers would give an aptly elegiac feel, but public statuary is often high up on plinths and the angles are problematic. Then Douglas found The St John's Ambulance Bearers: a small, 1919 bronze by Benjamin Clemens in the Imperial War Museum. Shot close-up, it combined monumentalism with a moving intimacy.

"I put in the moody, cloudy sky to add a touch of realism," says Smith. "Early versions were embossed, so the figures were in kind of bas-relief, giving it more of a tomb-like quality."

Smith left his mark on Jam covers in more ways than one. That's him on the A299, in a moody shot by Martyn Goddard on the sleeve of the *Strange Town* single. "But by the time of *Sound Affects*, Paul had basically become the art director," he concedes. "He gave me the *BBC Sound Effects* record and showed me what he wanted changing. He said, 'Just give me some pictures that relate to the songs.'"

Between them, Smith and Goddard filled the squares. The telephone box was in Gravesend, where Smith lived; the dog – named Max – belonged to his partner's parents. Goddard shot the hearse in Islington and the baby was a friend's. But it was the last significant piece of artwork that Smith would create for The Jam. The Munch illustration on the *Funeral Pyre* sleeve was brought in by Weller; Smith directed the video but had another, for *Absolute Beginners*, rejected (it was screened at the Jam exhibition, *About The Young Idea*, at Somerset House in 2015). After that, they went their separate ways.

*Cover Stories* includes iconic Smith sleeves for The Cure's *Three Imaginary Boys* and Genesis's *Abacab* (picked from Smith's sketch book by Mike Rutherford after the band knocked back the illustrator he originally proposed) and much more. But it's rare for a sleeve designer to embed with an artist in the way he did with The Jam.

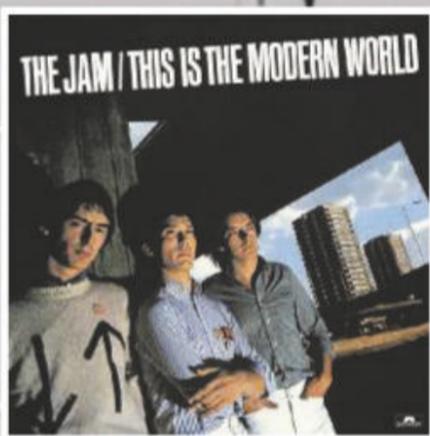
"I was incredibly lucky to work with a band from their first bit of recorded music," says Smith. "Five album covers and 16 or 17 single bags is not bad going – a lot of work in a short space of time. And it was an awful lot of fun."

Martyn Goddard

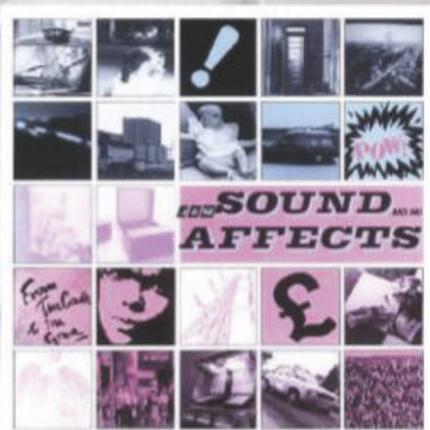
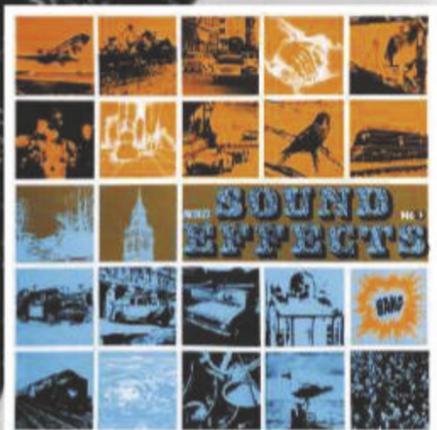
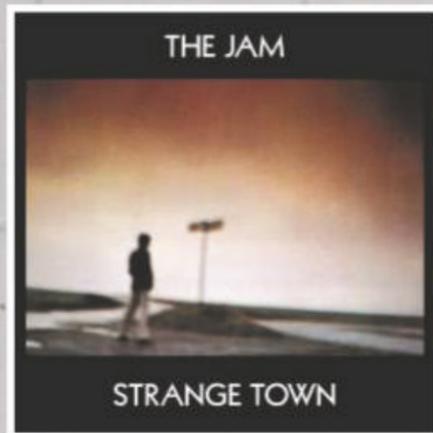
*Cover Stories: The Album Art Of Bill Smith Studio 1977-2019*, is published by Red Planet Books on April 27 priced at £25. Order at [www.redplanetbooks.com](http://www.redplanetbooks.com).



**"I HAD THIS STORY IN MY HEAD. THE JAM WERE BEING CHASED BY A RIVAL BAND OR GANG, AND THEY'D HIDDEN IN THIS UNDERGROUND TOILET." BILL SMITH**



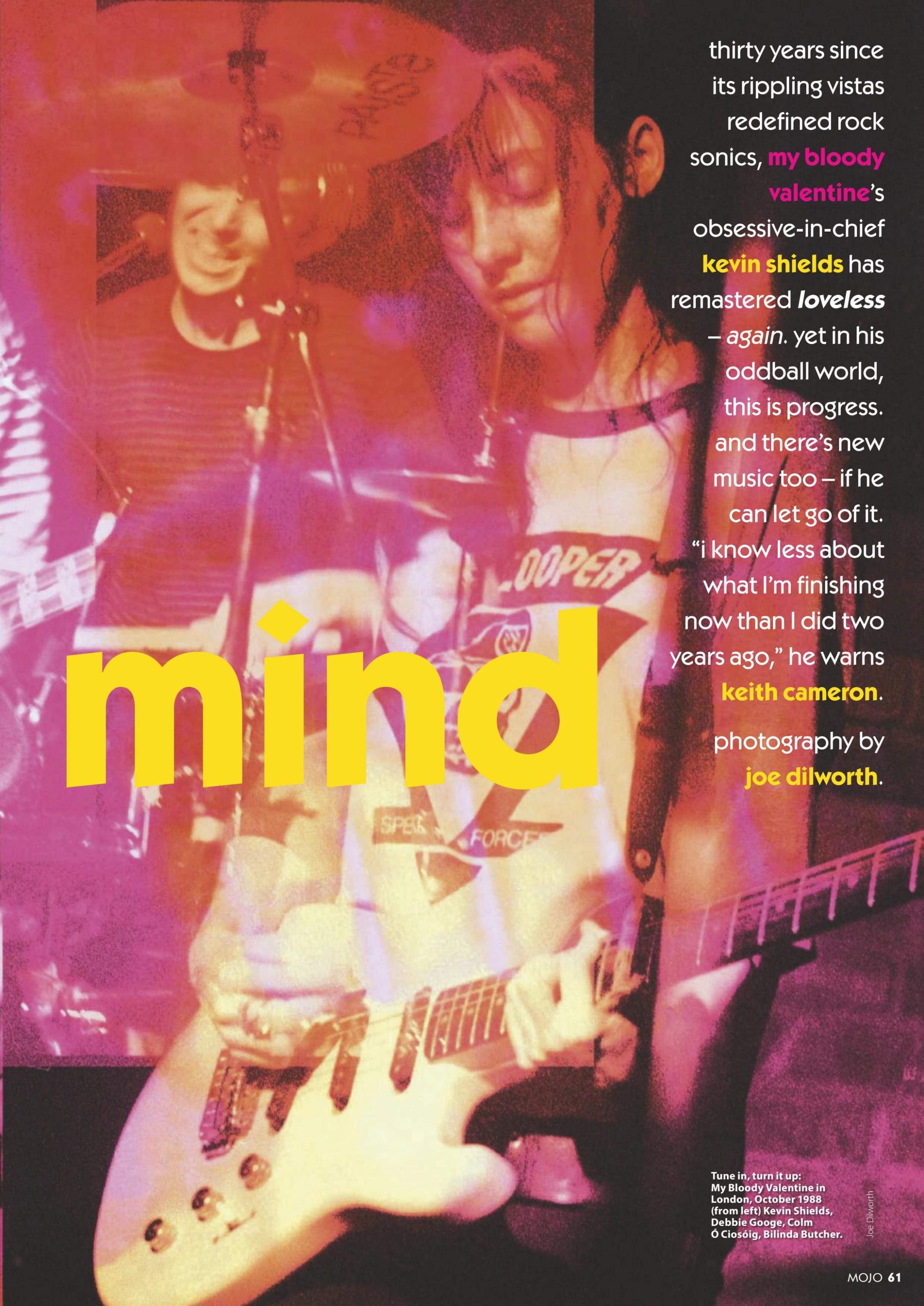
Direction, reaction, creation:  
 (main image) Bill Smith on the set  
 of his first Jam sleeve design, 1977;  
 (insets: this row, from left) *In The  
 City* (1977); *This Is The Modern World*  
 (1977); David Watts/'A' *Bomb In  
 Wardour Street* (1978);  
 (middle row, from left) *Down In The  
 Tube Station At Midnight* (1978);  
*All Mod Cons* (1978); *Strange Town*  
 (1979); *Setting Sons* (1979);  
 (bottom row, from left) *BBC Sound  
 Effects No. 1* (1969), the inspiration  
 for *Sound Affects* (1980); *Funeral Pyre*  
 (1981); *Absolute Beginners* (1981).



of

Sound





# mind

thirty years since its rippling vistas redefined rock sonics, **my bloody valentine's** obsessive-in-chief **kevin shields** has remastered *loveless* – *again*. yet in his oddball world, this is progress. and there's new music too – if he can let go of it. "i know less about what i'm finishing now than i did two years ago," he warns **keith cameron**. photography by **joe dilworth**.

Tune in, turn it up:  
My Bloody Valentine in  
London, October 1988  
(from left) Kevin Shields,  
Debbie Googe, Colm  
Ó Ciosóig, Bilinda Butcher.

Joe Dilworth



ONE DAY IN 1996, KEVIN Shields was summoned from his south London HQ to the Hammersmith offices of Island Records. His band My Bloody Valentine had signed to the major label in October 1992, 11 months after the release of *Loveless*, an album made under such stressful circumstances over three years it fractured their relationship with indie

rock bastion Creation, yet was acclaimed by critics in terms that stretched the limits of hyperbole. "Its creative inspiration defies belief," Select's Andrew Perry gasped; "A virtual reinvention of the guitar," Q's Martin Aston declared; "The outermost, innermost, uttermost rock record of 1991," Melody Maker's Simon Reynolds swooned.

Thanks to the painful birth and staggering realisation of *Loveless*, the 29-year-old Shields was anointed with the mystic hue of a pioneer, a post-punk Brian Wilson. Island outbid every other record company for his signature, and now looked forward to their avant-pop genius delivering the future of rock music.

Four years later, the sum total of My Bloody Valentine's post-*Loveless* releases amounted to two cover versions: Wire's *Map Reference 41°N 93°W*, for a tribute record called *Whore*, and John Barry's James Bond theme *We Have All The Time In The World*, for *Peace Together*, a charity album for youth organisations in Northern Ireland. Both were respectful acts of homage rather than radical new designs. Island had invested in the band to the extent of paying them to buy a house and build a studio, yet still awaited a My Bloody Valentine album.

"I was called to a meeting," Shields says today from his home in rural Ireland. "They said, 'There's three bands on our label and you all have something in common. You've all built your own studios, you're all totally independent, you all smoke a lot of pot, and you're all late. It's you, the Stereo MCs and The Orb. The first one to hit £500,000 in advances and costs gets the plug pulled.' And I guess we won that race."

Shields chuckles at the notion of My Bloody Valentine winning a race of any kind. Island's high-ups were true to their word: in 1997, Shields' monthly retainer of £5,000

was stopped, with the suggestion he go on the dole to complete the album. "I was like, 'That's actually fraud – I'm not gonna pretend I'm looking for work when I'm finishing an album for a major record company.'"

By that point, My Bloody Valentine effectively no longer existed. Both drummer Colm Ó Ciosóig and bassist Debbie Googe departed the communal house-cum-studio during 1995. Singer-guitarist Bilinda Butcher hung on until '97, though by her own subsequent admission, as Shields' ex-partner it might have been healthier had she left earlier. "Everything was supposed to be so good when we moved to the house and in some way everything just became so bad

instead," she said. Googe later reflected: "We were essentially all mental."

Each was wrung out by the psychological strain of making an album to the beat of Kevin Shields' obsessive instincts, a process undermined and obscured by studio technical problems, intra-band conflict, and much dope-smoking. At least the others could leave: Shields, the band's musical visionary, had no option but to navigate the meandering topography of his mind. An exit strategy presented itself in late 1997 when Primal Scream invited him to remix their song *If They Move, Kill 'Em*, which led to him joining the band as auxiliary on-stage guitarist: this semi-permanent posting to a rock'n'roll version of the French Foreign Legion lasted until 2006, and liberated Shields from his inner stasis.

"It wasn't so much that I had felt this pressure to follow up *Loveless*, it was more like the practical world around us was, as usual, pretty unstable," he says. "And by the time it stabilised, it took a few years, mainly because the band broke up in the middle."

In tandem with his Primal Scream furlough, Shields' rapprochement with the world beyond his head yielded four pieces for Sofia Coppola's 2003 film *Lost In Translation*, a commission which entailed writing new music somewhat in the style of his old band. The soundtrack became as celebrated as the film: in absentia, My Bloody Valentine's memory

had become mythologised by a new generation, for whom the term 'shoegaze' was untainted by the pejorative connotations of its origins as a jab at the early '90s slew of post-MBV groups that included Ride and Slowdive. And although it's easy to assume an inevitability about

## a sonic bond

in 2010, *mojo's* guest editor employed **kevin shields** on his *wake up the nation* album. a mutual admiration was born.

**PAUL WELLER** and Kevin Shields: an unlikely alliance? "Because of Primal Scream, I had a loose association with people who all kind of know each other," Shields explains. "And Paul Weller was part of that world a little bit."

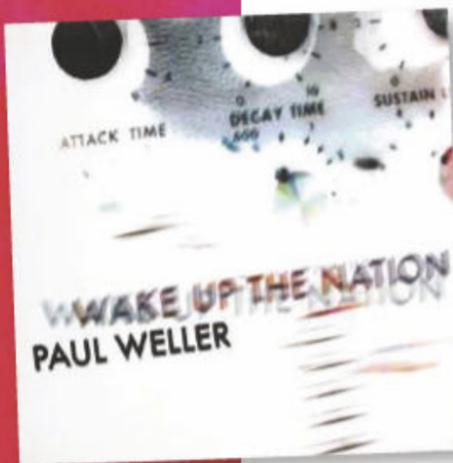
But when Shields arrived at Black Barn in 2009 to work on tracks that became *She Speaks* and *7 & 3 Is The Striker's Name*, the portents were concerning.

"I plugged in my pedals and nothing worked at all," he recalls. "It was like, 'Oh, shit, oh, shit!' I was falling on my face extremely badly. But Paul was really cool. He was just like, 'Oh, fuck it, you know, just make some feedback, that sounds really cool.'"

Shields was struck by Weller's open-mindedness.

"The phase of records he was making at that time, he was being very experimental, exploring all sorts of electronic music and post-rock," says Shields. "It reminded me of when people are like 17, or 18, when you're in a band: 'Have you heard this?' He's definitely not somebody who's artistically stuck anywhere."

You'd think the meticulous Shields would be horrified by the spontaneity of Weller in full flow, but not a bit of it. "He just happens to be talented enough to be able to do that. There was no kind of slaving away trying to get something right. It was banging out shit left, right and centre, and all good results."





“when friends of mine had children, i gave them decibel meters. i said, ‘i want to know how loud is your baby?’”



Electric warrior: Kevin Shields in 1990, with his favoured Fender Jazzmaster and Jaguar guitars; (opposite, from left) Kevin plays MBV's debut gig, Ivy Rooms, Dublin, August 17, 1983; with Patti Smith at the 2008 ATP festival; Shields with Primal Scream, 1999; (insets, right) *Loveless*; the *Whore Wire* tribute album; Shields' Primal Scream remix; Patti & Kevin's *The Coral Sea*.

My Bloody Valentine's eventual reunion – first as a live entity in 2008, then at last releasing a new album, *m b v*, in 2013 – Shields attributes another collaboration as the pivotal factor: two shows in 2005 and 2006 where he improvised accompaniment to *The Coral Sea*, Patti Smith's poetic tribute to Robert Mapplethorpe. There was, he suggests, a benedictory quality to Smith's approach that allowed him to safely reconcile with his past.

“Patti was the catalyst for me to go back and re-explore everything, the way I used to do it. My time with Primal Scream was an experiment in creating sounds that fit in with things. Very much not how I play guitar with My Bloody Valentine, where I use a tremolo arm, it's expressive... it has to be the whole sound. When Patti asked me to do that, I got inspired. I spent an evening familiarising myself with all these guitars and tunings I hadn't touched since '96 or '97. We didn't rehearse. It was a wonderful opportunity to work with somebody who was truly a kind of genius at being improvisational. I was virtually hypnotised by her to do that. It was a real turning point.”

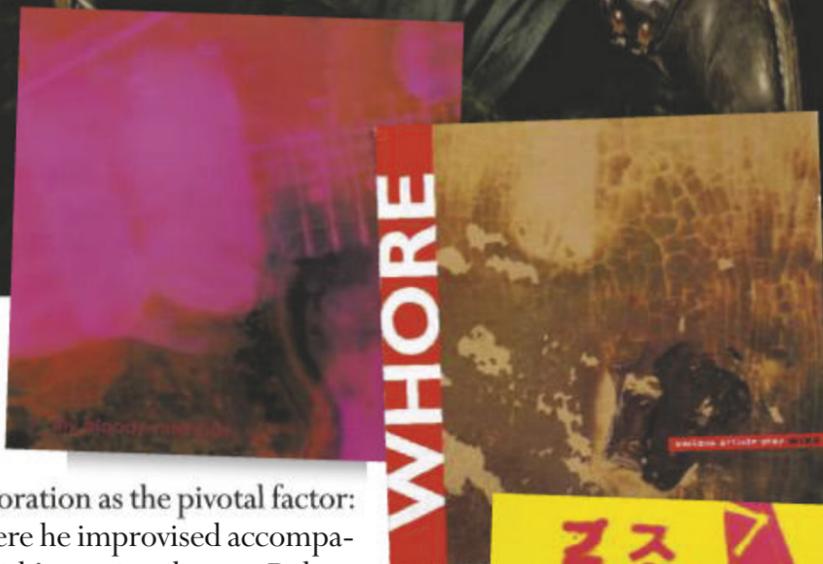
In 2006, Shields began remastering My Bloody Valentine's 1988-91 output for a proposed reissue campaign by Sony, which upon the demise of Creation had inherited the rights to *Loveless*,

its 1988 predecessor *Isn't Anything*, plus four contemporaneous EPs. Although the releases were delayed until 2012 by what Shields terms “bullshit complicated

record company problem reasons”, they represented a further step in his journey of self-rediscovery. While disinterring the Creation era, Shields discovered a pile of CDs containing work from 1996-97, the tail end of his attempts to make an album for Island, at which point he was working in the Streatham studio alone, save for an initial period where Spring Heel Jack's engineer Mads Bjerke tutored him in

drum'n'bass production techniques (which Shields and Ó Cíosóig had been labouring to teach themselves for two years). Listening to this music from the perspective of 10 years hindsight was revelatory.

Getty



◀ “By 2006 I realised this record I was making was really valid,” he says. “It wasn’t just a collection of songs – the mood and the attitude and what I was doing was really worth finishing.”

Reconvening the classic My Bloody Valentine line-up in 2008 floored audiences, not only with the infamous MBV volume levels – the band paid for earplugs to be distributed at gigs and festivals – but also the music’s enduring currency. Then in February 2013, following a surprise announcement on the band’s website, the long-awaited *m b v* finally appeared.

This relationship between past, present and future continues to drive Shields today, at his home studio, where he’s been concurrently working on the next My Bloody Valentine album – or EPs, or both – and overseeing the latest catalogue spruce-up. MBV’s new record label Domino is rolling out a 1988–2013 reissue campaign, restoring the albums to streaming services, with CDs and vinyl to follow. According to Domino, ‘Deluxe’ vinyl versions of *Isn’t Anything* and *Loveless* have been mastered from “full analog cuts for the first time since 1991” while ‘Standard’ versions feature “brand new digital cuts”. Comprehensively, or confusingly, 2-CD versions of *Loveless* contain two copies of the album: one from an analog master, one from an “original” digital master. As for *m b v*, it will now be available “across physical formats globally for the first time ever”.

Although Shields appreciates such seemingly abstruse details, for him the primary reason for revisiting his back pages yet again is to make them widely available; in 2018, with the Creation catalogue still Sony’s domain, Shields’ analog remasters of *Isn’t Anything* and *Loveless* were a limited self-release (likewise *m b v*). “And then,” he says, “we got free. This is the first time the vinyl has been available properly for 30 years. So that’s the motivation – to have vinyl not selling at 250 quid.”

Anyone thinking this must be the last word in audiophile MBV estate management would be mistaken, though. Shields hopes to do a half-speed mastered, 45 rpm version of *Loveless* this year, if Covid

permits a visit to the mastering studio. “Purely for audio reasons, it’d be nice,” he says. “I’m not finished with *Loveless* at all.”

#### Can you possibly feel excited at going into a studio and listening intently to *Loveless* once again?

It’s like a never-ending work in progress. Every time I approach it, I hear it differently. *Loveless* is extremely... not fragile exactly, because it could be in any environment and still sound like itself. But each time, it’s a little mountain to climb. It’s not the easiest thing to get right. And it’s enjoyable, actually. But I wouldn’t want to be only doing remasters for the rest of my life. For the past few weeks it’s felt like a real luxury to get back to new music. It reminds me how much I don’t want to repeat myself, and do something different.

#### How was it “getting free” from Sony?

In the end it was all pretty civil and reasonable. But with the remastering work I did in 2006, we discovered Sony had withheld a significant amount of money. So it took between 2006 and 2012 to persuade them to pay us money we had already earned. There’s a pretty extreme story, with us in the background, that will be told someday. They were terrible people. By 2012, the people there were significantly nicer and cooler.

#### Did that make Creation’s foibles seem quite innocent in comparison?

Not really. Creation was messy. Very, very messy. Alan [McGee] and Dick [Green, Creation co-owners] were only a couple of years older than us when we started *Loveless*. They were in Biff Bang Pow! – that was their total experience of recording albums. Suddenly, they’ve got me on their hands, who’s in a totally different headspace. They found it incomprehensible, and I found their behaviour incomprehensible. We were all doing it for the first time, and it was chaotic.

#### In 2007, Alan McGee described My Bloody Valentine as “my comedy band... a joke”. Was that hurtful?

You know, he’s said so much over the years. Reality is a whole other story. He was never around when we made records. He wasn’t involved in the process on any imaginable level. We weren’t his *anything*. In fact, the bands were divided between Dick Green and Alan, and we were one of “Dick’s bands”. Alan was just somebody who had an opinion after the fact. You know there’s now a Creation film?

#### Are you portrayed in it?

Minimally. I think the director [Nick Moran] included us because the screenplay, or whatever you want to call it, was done by... what’s his name? *Trainspotting* guy...

#### Irvine Welsh.

Yeah. He doesn’t really know what happened at Creation, so you wind up



To hear knows when: the reunited My Bloody Valentine play the Coachella Music Festival, Indio, California, April 19, 2009; (above) with the Classic Album award at 2008’s MOJO Honours List (from left) Shields, Ó Ciosóig, Butcher, Googe.



“*loveless* is like a never-ending work in progress. every time i approach it, i hear it differently.”

with this not particularly engaging story. So the director fashioned something more believable, and included us. No speaking, just me giving Alan the finger when he's trying to get into the studio. That never happened. In '89, we were recording an EP and Alan came down. He hadn't been there at all in '88, so this is our first experience of Alan McGee in the studio. He was going, "It has to be the best thing in the world..." After a few hours of Alan's ranting, we'd decided, "We don't need this person around us when we're making music." He went out for coffee, and I said to the engineer, "Close the door and lock it." Alan was incredulous. Later that year, we were starting *Loveless* and it wasn't going very well, and he came down. I had fashioned this acoustic guitar with a tremolo. He picked it up, pulled the tremolo arm up as opposed to down, and immediately broke a string. I was like, "What did you just do?!" He got so flustered, like, "Maybe I shouldn't be here." When we finished *Loveless*, I played it back to him. He said, "That sounds expensive. You're either John Lennon or you're fucking nuts." I was neither, but there you go.

**A** MERICAN-BORN TO IRISH parents who relocated the family to Dublin when he was 10, Shields moved back to Ireland in 2015. Although he retains a studio in London, he no longer has a flat there. "We got these big dogs," he says. "Well, they were little dogs, but they're Pyrenees Mountain Dogs and they grew big. The point being that we didn't like leaving them after a while. I would go over to London to work, but Anna, my wife, just stayed. That became less fun."

Theoretically, a house in the scenic Irish countryside with its own recording studio and no neighbours wouldn't be the worst place for a musician to ride out a global pandemic. But Shields has had "plenty of other shit going down," he says. "Sick family members, not being allowed to see them. Otherwise, it's OK, because we kind of work from home. So it's been kind of normal. But not."

In a 2018 interview for Fender, Shields offered a glimpse of his home working arrangements. Surrounded by guitars, explaining the Jazzmaster's intrinsic role in his hallmark technique, he also talked about *m b v*, something he didn't do very much around its low-key release, apart from "a handful of interviews after the fact. What I did say was, 'In a few years' time this record will make a lot of sense.'"

It is, as he explains now, a long story. But essentially, *m b v* anticipated the apocalyptic state of the world today, as foreseen in Kevin's mind circa 1996 amid a four-year "consciousness-changing experience" involving Qigong meditation and extensive study of Jung's psychological theories. At the apex of the cocaine-fuelled Britpop-booming '90s, Shields intuited the impending bust. "I saw a pattern of nostalgia," he says. "A saying-goodbye quality. And also a resolution towards something new at the same time. Rebirth involves pain, and huge stress. The record that I was making in '96, and '97 was reflecting this feeling where I was pretty sure the world we thought we were moving into was not going to happen. That we're actually at the end of something."

Upon revisiting the music 10 years later, Shields felt encouraged to see the journey

through, completing the album during 2011 and 2012. The penultimate track, the unrelenting militaristic churn of *Nothing Is*, represented doomsday, while the closing *Wonder 2* was the sound of rebirth, with all its attendant hope and fear. "In that 2018 Fender interview, I was saying stuff like 'the bad guys' time is coming, it's people time now.' Six months later, Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion kick in. When I was making that music, it was like a graffiti tag, saying 'I was there'. It's a mood of our time."

**Presumably, mid-Covid, *m b v* feels even more prescient to you?**

That record is going to be relevant for a very long time. This is a turning point in the world's existence, basically. We can't pretend the environment isn't fucked. We can't pretend society isn't broken. Covid just shines a huge light on everything and says, 'This is shit.'

**How does that situation affect the next My Bloody Valentine record?**

Well, I'm in a funny place. We started off trying to make an EP, that we were going to release in 2018. Then an album. Maybe two EPs? But that seemed too constricting. Until last year, I had the structure: we had 15 songs, vocals on some of them, mostly guitars and drums. At the start, I felt this need to make a record that was warm and personable and not too strange. Then during this past year, everything has changed. This time has created a need to do something a bit different. So I'm winding up with a glut of material; we're gonna have two albums and a couple of EPs. I know less about what I'm finishing now than I did two years ago. But it feels really vital.

**How's your hearing these days?**

It's OK. Compared to most people my age, it's fine. But it was always better than average, so I guess all the damage has brought me to a place that's average. But absolutely we got damaged from it. With My Bloody Valentine live, whatever people out front thought about it, where I was it was worse.

**And was that necessary – was it worth it?**

Oh yeah. If you play a drum kit in any fashion considered vaguely normal, it's immediately a very loud instrument. And when you want the music around to sound balanced, you're in a situation where it's 120 decibels – or 115, with peaks up to 120. That's the natural volume of most music. Even orchestral music has peaks of 120 decibels, and people are afraid to play certain composers because the pieces are so loud. There's a reality to music. It's like a baby crying. When friends of mine had children, because I had an obsession with measuring decibels (*laughs*) I gave them decibel meters. I said, "I want to know how loud is your baby?" It was 122 decibels. A baby's like, "I can be louder than anything." So a baby's louder than is 'reasonable'. This is what I'm saying: what's reasonable volume, and what's reality, are two different things. 'Reasonable volume' is a social concept. It's an idea. In reality, music is loud.

**Yet you're a quiet person. Do you greet each day with hope?**

I do. With the family medical stuff, being in a situation where you're made powerless was really unpleasant, and if this kind of thing becomes the norm I can see people just exploding. There's a growing awareness that the systems we've arrived at after thousands of years of social development aren't good at dealing with big crises. Because it's just people of a certain type in positions of authority and power, and that doesn't really work in the big picture. So, yeah, I feel positive. We're in for lots of ominous, don't-know-what-the-fuck-is-going-to-happen-ness. And also lots of positive change. So that's where we're at. And I feel lucky to be able to do this right now. 

## what you want

those *mbv* reissues, re-reviewed  
by keith cameron.

### isn't anything

★★★★★

(Creation 1988; Domino 2021 CD/DL/LP)



Although way beyond the shoegazing multitudes which followed, their debut full-length is still the classic MBV line-up's only album with clearly identifiable antecedents: Hüsker Dü, Sonic Youth and especially Dinosaur Jr. are unself-consciously audible within (*When You Wake*) *You're Still In A Dream* and *You Never Should*, while on *Soft As Snow* (*But Warm Inside*) Kevin and Bilinda's still-discernible vocals talk dirty with the chaste charm of the indie disco. Its desiccated discontinuity remains odd and compelling.

### loveless

★★★★★

(Creation 1991; Domino 2021 CD/DL/LP)

A rarely spoken truth now it has entered art's highest chamber is that *Loveless* didn't initially impact among peers or fans with the same scorched earth force as its two prior EPs. But while including both *Soon* and *To Here Knows When* dampened the revolutionary ardour, over time the realisation dawned that – incredibly – everything else on *Loveless* was equally good. Is there a more unknowable yet emotional MBV song than *Sometimes*? This fathomless construct's capacity to beguile never fails.

### EPs 1988-1991

★★★★★

(Sony 2012; Domino 2021 CD/DL/LP)



Although a downgrade from initial reports of a rarities box, this 2-CD set still offered an essential alternate MBV history lesson: how quickly the group moved on from subverting classic indie tropes circa *You Made Me Realise* and *Slow* (where Shields first came upon his "melted" guitar sound) to creating their own unique universe on *Glider* and *Tremolo*. The final two unreleased tracks didn't make *Isn't Anything* simply because Shields hated his vocals. Such is the price of perfectionism.

### *m b v*

★★★★★

(MBV Records 2013; Domino 2021 CD/DL/LP)



A combination of its initial self-release and roots in recordings dating to 1996 has perhaps damned *m b v* to semi-parenthetical status. On its own terms, however, this was both a worthy epilogue to *Loveless* – with opener *She Found Now*, entirely recorded in 2012, refracting its predecessor's memory through age and experience – and a new perspective. The pummelling climactic triptych (*In Another Way*; *Nothing Is*; *Wonder 2*) delivers a head-rush unparalleled in the MBV canon for sheer shock and awe.

Physical formats of My Bloody Valentine's Domino reissues will be available from May 21.



# PAID **THE COST** TO BE

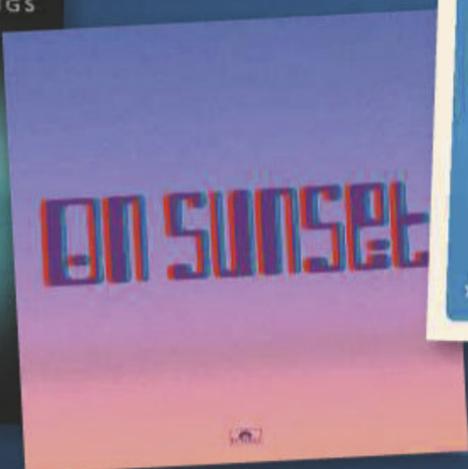
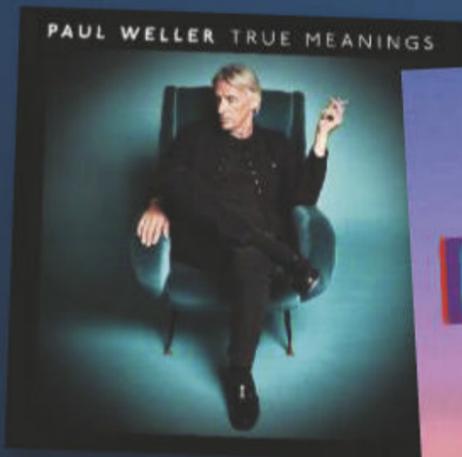
DEALT COVID LEMONS, MOJO'S GUEST EDITOR HAS BEEN BUSY MAKING LEMONADE: AN ALBUM OF 12 SINGLES, FULL OF SPUNK AND SOUL. BUT PRODUCTIVITY HAS ITS SHADOW SIDE, WHEN YOU HEAR TIME'S CLOCK CLICK EVER LOUDER AND YOU CAN'T TOUR TILL 2022. "I'LL BE 64 THAT YEAR," **PAUL WELLER** REMINDS **TED KESSLER**. "THAT'S A FUNNY OLD AGE TO GO BACK ON THE ROAD."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NICOLE NODLAND**.

**W**HEN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FIRST SUNK ITS teeth into Britain, shutting the nation down in March 2020, Paul Weller was presented with what appeared to be an insurmountable problem.

His new album, the free-spirited *On Sunset*, was due to be released that June. He had a lavish live reading of it planned, with strings and brass, but very quickly it became apparent that there would be no live performances allowed that year. Weller was distraught. He believed that *On Sunset*'s soulful, softly psychedelic stylings delivered a career highlight. He was proud of it. He didn't want it to flash brightly upon release and then vanish. Peering into his back catalogue, he had flicked through 45 years of recordings with The Jam, The Style Council and as a solo artist to select songs that could slot pleasurably into a setlist driven by the new album. "I had the perfect show designed in my mind," he says, wistfully. "I still have it."

He had to let it go. But he didn't mope. Instead, he started writing. And less than a year later, Weller has another album in the can: *Fat Pop (Volume 1)*. It's not been compiled from *On Sunset*'s brightest off-cuts, however. It's an all-new 12-song burst of three-minute knee-tremblers, a path of instant melodic gratification Weller has not mapped as deliberately on any of its recent predecessors, but for which he has some notable form. They're "pop songs, in old money," he says. It's the third distinct prong on a remarkable late-career renaissance that began with 2018's pastoral inner-visions, *True Meanings*. ➤





# THE BOSS

In full bloom: Paul Weller, Black Barn Studios, Ripley, Surrey, Monday, February 15, 2021.

MOJO's June 2021 guest editor and his predecessors (from left) David Bowie, Tom Waits, Noel Gallagher and Keith Richards.

“MUSIC'S FOREVER GIVING.  
IT CUTS THROUGH  
ALL CULTURES.  
IT'S INFORMATION,  
EDUCATION,  
ENTERTAINMENT.”



“Gonna be brilliant to play live,” remarks Weller, ruefully, looking up at the sky as if checking for clearance to take off. It’s not forthcoming. At writing it’s unclear when live performances will be possible in 2021.

So, occupying the pre-release time that would normally be filled with rehearsing, Paul Weller has found a new gig. He’s MOJO’s Guest Editor this month.

“It’s a great honour,” he declares. “I’ve been getting MOJO since it started. I remember reading the first issue on the tour bus back in 1994 and thinking, *Finally*. There haven’t been many guest editors, have there?”

David Bowie, Tom Waits, Noel Gallagher and Keith Richards.

“Yeah, a great honour.”

You join him, socially distanced but very much in-the-flesh, on a bench nestled by the jukebox in the control-room of Black Barn Studios, the memorabilia-festooned recording hub that Weller has owned in the dinky Surrey village of Ripley since 1999. It is the umpteenth of February, during the longest post-war winter on record. Despite his enthusiasm for this part-time role editing MOJO, it’s unlikely that Weller will be swapping Black Barn for a career hot-desking at a start-up publisher in East London. He’s enjoyed the task. But never again.

“I wouldn’t want to be the Editor every month because it’s probably a thankless job,” he agrees, with a pitying snort. “I’ve had a chance to put everything I like in. It’s been good to do, but I’m at the other end of the process. I make the music, you lot write about it.”

He wonders if he has the temperament to be an editor anyway, greasing the wheels that must be greased. Surely running an operation like Paul Weller’s isn’t that different, though. What kind of boss is he?

“Not for me to say,” he replies, modestly. Weller cocks his head towards studio engineer Charles Rees, who’s making himself look busy at the mixing desk.

“Charles?”

“Yes, mein Führer?” responds Rees, instantly, clicking his heels. A smile dances momentarily across Weller’s lips. “Firm but fair, let’s say.”

WHAT KIND OF BOSS WELLER MIGHT BE IS PERHAPS answered by describing the kind of man he is. Annoyingly, he is complex.

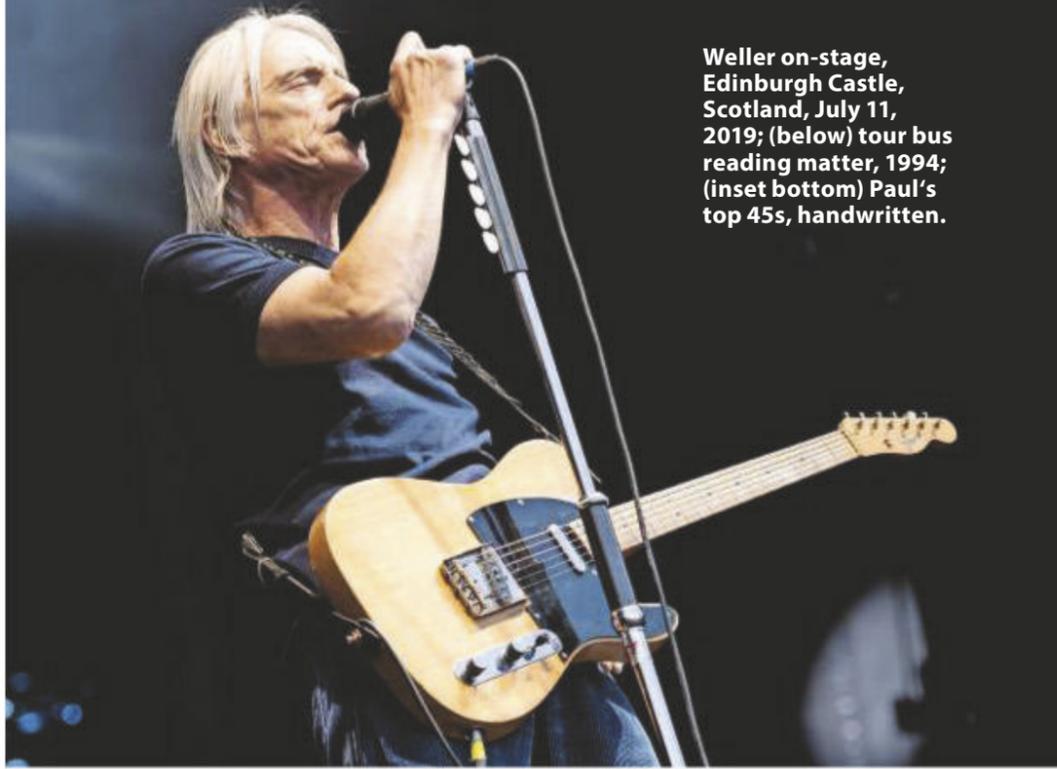
Spend any time with Paul Weller and you soon forget you are spending time with Paul Weller, a poster of whom – executing a leap while swinging a Rickenbacker – you may have had stuck to your childhood bedroom wall. Instead, you could be catching up with a rarely-glimpsed old school pal. He wants to know how the family are doing. He’s got a vaguely dirty anecdote to share. He needs to learn about any new music you’ve heard recently. When he texts to clarify something, he does so employing the idiosyncratic grammar of an elderly relative new to iPhones. You soon feel very comfortable in his presence. Unusually in the orbit of an internationally renowned rock star, everyone is on equal footing. He brews his round of tea.

What sets him apart, of course, is his once-in-a-generation way with a song that summarises a moment in time or emotion, allied to an impressive work ethic. Check his track record: 22 UK Top 10 albums; seven of them Number 1s. “I’m just trying to match what’s gone before,” he says, considering his high levels of productivity, “as every time we lift the bar a little higher.”

He’s driven, which is the biggest clue to what kind of boss or editor he might be. The source of that drive is clear.

Weller was 53 when he released a song called *That Dangerous Age*, but he could have been 31, or 17, or 44, because every age is dangerous for Paul Weller. “We don’t know, we can’t always see, but old Father Tyme, ah you know he don’t care,” he sang with rich regret on *On Sunset*’s *Old Father Tyme*. “Whatever he gives you has

# SINGLE FILE



Weller on-stage, Edinburgh Castle, Scotland, July 11, 2019; (below) tour bus reading matter, 1994; (inset bottom) Paul's top 45s, handwritten.



The 10 tasty 45s currently stacked in Paul Weller's inner jukebox. Notes by **Ted Kessler**.

**JON LUCIEN**  
Search For  
The Inner Self  
(Ampex, 1971)



A permanent entry in Weller's Top 10, his signed original 7-inch of this rare, deep soul groove is among his proudest possessions. No offers, though: Weller won't sell.

**SAM FENDER**  
Leave Fast  
(Polydor, 2018)



Spiritual relative of The Jam's That's Entertainment describes a young man's fear of being stuck in a small town amid "broken fridges and torn-up sofas" beyond his leave-by date.

**CHILDISH GAMBINO**  
This Is America  
(RCA, 2018)



Actor Donald Glover's powerful rap-gospel statement about American gun violence and institutional racism provides philosophical inspiration for Weller's That Pleasure on Fat Pop (Volume 1).

**THE CORAL**  
Dreaming Of You  
(Deltasonic, 2002)



One of James Skelly's earliest compositions for the Wirral-ites details teenage longing as a glorious sing-along soul-shanty. Showcase for the nascent skills of guitarist Bill Ryder-Jones.

**ESTHER PHILLIPS**  
Home Is Where  
The Hatred Is  
(Kudu, 1972)



Phillips' tender cover of Gil Scott-Heron's original from the same year squeezes even more confessional soul from a tale of a junkie's quest for peace: both had skin in that game.

**THE FATBACK BAND**  
(Are You Ready)  
Do the Bus Stop  
(Polydor, 1975)



Released in the teeth of the New York disco storm, the deep funk call-and-response of Bus Stop was a massive hit on dancefloors, but failed to gain the chart traction it was ultimately designed for.

**KATHRYN WILLIAMS**  
Heart Shaped Stone  
(One Little Indian, 2013)



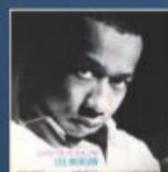
A lush, string-drenched tale about searching for love and the subsequent ebb-and-flow of a relationship from the honey-voiced English singer-songwriter, a big Weller favourite.

**THE HEADHUNTERS**  
God Made Me Funky  
(Arista, 1975)



The jazz-funk sextet's *Survival Of The Fittest* LP was the first without Herbie Hancock on keyboards, but it did produce this magnificent nine-minute funkathon with The Pointer Sisters boosting the choir.

**LEE MORGAN**  
Search For  
The New Land  
(Blue Note, 1966)



Hard bop thrills from trumpeter Morgan plus Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and more on this pairing of *The Joker and Mr Kenyatta* (drawn from the contemporaneous *Search...* album) on an unusual 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm 7-inch.

**THE STROPPIES**  
Cellophane Car  
(Tough Love, 2019)



An infectious reading of the one-fingered keyboard text (*à la* The Velvet Underground) by these key players on Melbourne's alternative scene. Hear it on our Weller-curated CD!

a price to bear." He is chased by time at every turn. This is the man, after all, who split The Jam at 24 because he didn't want to be trapped in a marriage too young.

Today, he is 62 years old, 63 in May. He looks in fine fettle: lean as a whippet with long white locks, a red Harrington jacket over a navy polo shirt – one of his own designs for a range with Sunspel – smart checked strides paired with loafers. Looks, however, can be deceiving. The lockdown has impacted him deeply.

"If we don't gig until 2022, I'll be 64 that year," he says forlornly. "That's a funny old age to go back on the road."

His life has been full and enjoyable, but the problem for Weller has always been that it will end. "I feel the weight of mortality. I was talking to my mate the other day who's my age. And he said, 'You realise that one of us will probably be dead in the next 10 years?' We both laughed, because we were joking, but... that's the reality. It's gone so quickly. Too quickly."

Hence 16 solo albums in 19 years; five in the last six. Weller needs to work to keep the black dog locked out. So when his band started receiving demos on their phones in the middle of the night last spring, soon after completing *On Sunset*, they were not surprised in the slightest.

"He was the first person I thought of when lockdown was announced," says his long-time guitar foil Steve Cradock. "'What the fuck is Paul going to do?!' Write songs, obviously. He climbs the walls anyway. He's been on the road since the 1970s."

The songs soon revealed their shape as a body of work to Weller. The playful expansiveness of *On Sunset* had been streamlined. There would be little call for the unplugged acoustics of *True Meanings*. He was wiping the slate clean.

"I wanted to make an album where every song could be released as a single," he says, before remembering sadly that this is the modern world. "If that sort of thing still existed. They call them 'impact tracks' now." He pauses, as if swilling sour milk. "I had thought about releasing ➤



"It's peaceful. Space to think": Weller takes five, Black Barn, February 2021; (opposite from top) Paul with father John Weller, December 5, 1982; outside the studio.

**"WHO DOESN'T  
WONDER IF THEY'RE  
A GOOD FATHER,  
A GOOD PARTNER?  
A GOOD PERSON?"**



◀ each one as a single first, but was quickly talked out of that."

Flick open the *Fat Pop (Volume 1)* box – "I'm keeping my options open for a second volume" – and pick out a confection at random: each has its own distinct flavour. Testify, a call and response shared with Amen Corner legend Andy Fairweather Low that reverberates soulfully. Cosmic Fringes, the keyboard-driven opener that detonates a social-media "keyboard-warrior", channels a new wave mood to its modern conclusion. On the Jam-like True, Weller shares a delicious vocal with young Liverpoolian Lia Metcalfe of The Mysterines. That Pleasure, a '60s-soul-like song inspired by the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, struts across the piece, graciously indignant. At each turn, Weller is constructing a 12-song monument to the pop music that has shaped his adult life.

Nowhere is that more clear than on the title track. A deep groove – informed, he says, by DJ Muggs's Cypress Hill beats – it's Weller's love letter to music's life-saving qualities. "Who brings the light when the world's so dark," he solemnly demands, "who's always there when your life is down? *Fat Pop!*"

"Music has been my most reliable friend – and I am blessed with many great friends," he expands. "Music's a spiritual force, it covers so much ground: as a way of informing us, making us question things. It's been my whole life. Everything has been governed by it."

As if to prove his point, he offers to play a new song he has recorded. "It's a lockdown tune I did with Erland Cooper. He wrote the words, I sang 'em."

Another new song? What will he do with it?

Weller's manager, Claire Moon, stops in her tracks as she passes through the control room. "Please don't say it's for another album. We can't release three albums in three years!" She's joking, but she looks exhausted.

Weller chuckles. "The songs come when they come," he replies. "You can't turn them down, you never know when they might run out."

Charles Rees cues up the song in question – Burnout. This, it transpires, is a misty blues, with melancholic echoes of Robert Wyatt.

And that guitar hook, that's familiar. Sounds a bit like Breathe.

Weller looks quizzical. "Like what?"

Breathe? By Pink Floyd?

"Fuck off does it!" he says, genuinely offended. "Never heard it. Pink fucking Floyd!"

We sit in silence for a moment, to allow the comparison to make its chastened way out of the studio. Weller lights a cigarette. "I've got to keep at the recording," he says, quietly, almost to himself. "Keeps me off the streets."

**W**HEN PAUL WELLER IS RECORDING AT BLACK BARN, he lives in a cottage at the end of the garden. The band stay in the adjoining cottage, like The Monkees.

"It's handy when we're down here recording, it means there's no time limit. It's peaceful. Space to think. But I could never be in Ripley all the time. I'd go mad." He loves living in central London, with his wife and their three children. Close to the action. He's a Mod after all. "You feel the place is alive even locked-down."

We walk across the overturned wooden crates laid on the sodden lawn outside the studio and up the small hill to have a look at his dwellings. He reckons there are some nice colours in there. Nicole the photographer agrees and asks him to lie on his back on the red rug in the cottage's hall, as she straddles him. "At my age and all!" he quips, like Sid James in a Carry On film.

One of the many enviable posters and lithographs in the cottage is a screenprint of Françoise Hardy that inspired the artwork for *Fat Pop (Volume 1)*. Also here is the piano he wrote *Shades Of Blue* on, one night last year with his eldest daughter, 29-year-old Leah. He had the verse, but the chorus eluded him. Then Leah started to sing, "You spend all your life just to find all that matters is close to you..."

He loves it. The theme ties in with a recurring search for spiritual well-being that runs through the long-player. "There are a few songs about mental illness," he says. "Not mine necessarily, but I see it in others."

Has he suffered from depression?



“Yeah, I have done in my time. Definitely.”

And now?

“Well,” he begins. “Many things have changed. I’m happier in myself. Age and sobriety are the major factors.” He apologises for mentioning his sobriety. He hasn’t had a drink in over a decade, but he’s wary of preaching. “It’s major for me. I’m not in that sodden, blurry world any more. I’m more appreciative. It’s important to be humble, to say thank you to the power of prayer. Not to a Christian God, necessarily, but to the universe. To recognise your place in it all.”

He nods. “I find that helps.”

Growing up, he says, nobody talked about their feelings in his home. Feeling down? Having a bad day? “‘Oh well, have a drink, get on with it.’ Sometimes you need that. But I’ve had to learn other ways to deal with being down. Training is good, staying fit. Eating well.”

Weller’s latter-day demons are addressed by two standout songs on the album, the quietly furious *Failed* and the stately *Glad Times*, co-written by Anth Brown and MOJO writer Tom Doyle. They both deal with some of the frustrations presented by co-habitation and parenting.

*Failed* was written in the moments “after a huge row with the missus. Some songs you just have to get out there and say it. They fly out.” In it, he faces up to his limitations. “Who doesn’t wonder if they’re a good father, a good partner? A good person. People may think it’s strange hearing me sing ‘I’ve failed,’ but we all measure success differently.”

The nitty gritty of a long-term relationship, the absence that can be felt in marriage, is also considered in *Glad Times*. He’s been wed to his second wife, Hannah, since 2010. “It’s about that thing that happens to a lot of couples, especially with kids, you just miss each other. Everyone’s walking around the kitchen, doing different things and you... don’t notice each other.”

In that moment, Weller is beset by insecurity.

“You wonder, ‘Are you still in love? Is it still working?’ Because everything is so practical you need to work hard to see what you loved about that person.”

It’s a reason why he likes to work at Black Barn. “You feel the tug of their absence again.”

Outside, the sky is a deep blue, the first clear day in weeks, without an overnight frost. We step into it and let the sun wash our faces.

**B**ACK IN THE STUDIO, PAUL WELLER IS FLICKING through his iTunes, enthusing about new music. “Do you know Testify by Davie? That’s a tune. *Cosmorama* by Beautify Junkyards. They’re Portuguese, psychedelic. Good gear. I’m digging Vegyn, too, trying to get him to do a remix. I got the Pet Shop Boys to do a remix for this record. Proper banger.”

Friends recommend new music all the time to Weller. Under normal circumstances he heads to his local record shop to fill his boots, but even in lockdown he’s not tempted by Spotify.

“I am not for Spotify whatsoever,” he says firmly. “It’s great for punters. You pay your nine quid every month and listen to whatever you want. But for the artist it is shit. It’s disgraceful.”

He offers an example. “I had three million Spotify plays for *On Sunset*. For that I made nine and a half grand in revenue.” When Paul Weller is furious, his voice becomes quietly measured. “All right, it’s nine grand, but it’s not £3 million is it? Whichever fucker thought music should be free was a marketing whizz because that genie will not go back in the bottle.”

He lights a cigarette. It’s the final chink in his armour. “Forty-five years of smoking. That will be my downfall,” he says, exhaling. “But, you know, *c’est la vie*.”

Shortly before his father John died after a long illness in 2009, Weller asked him if he regretted cigarettes. “He said, ‘No, I had 40 beautiful years smoking.’ Fair enough. My main thing is how much longer I have with my kids.”

There are eight Weller children: the eldest, Nathaniel, is 32, the youngest, his daughter Nova, is four this year. “When I’m with Nova I have no worries. She’s so special. Some people ask if I should’ve had her at such a late age, but if I hadn’t then I wouldn’t have met her. Long after I’m gone they’ll be carrying on. So will their kids. It’s important to see that continuum.”

This, he says, is his key belief. The meaning to his life. There is a lot of love inside of him. “I think it grows, too. All you need really is love, John was right. Whether it’s love for what you’re doing, love for your fellow human. Through love comes positivity. You look forward to things when you’re in love.”

What Weller has to look forward to more specifically is sitting on a sofa in Claire Moon’s office and making plans for tours that may or may not happen. He knows he’ll have to have a Coronavirus vaccine to enable them, but is not overjoyed about that.

“The thought of putting heavy metals, mercury in my body, no. But I don’t want to be an anti-vax person, either. I had all the vaccines as a child. And if I have to take it to tour abroad I will, even though Brexit is a fucking nightmare for playing Europe.”

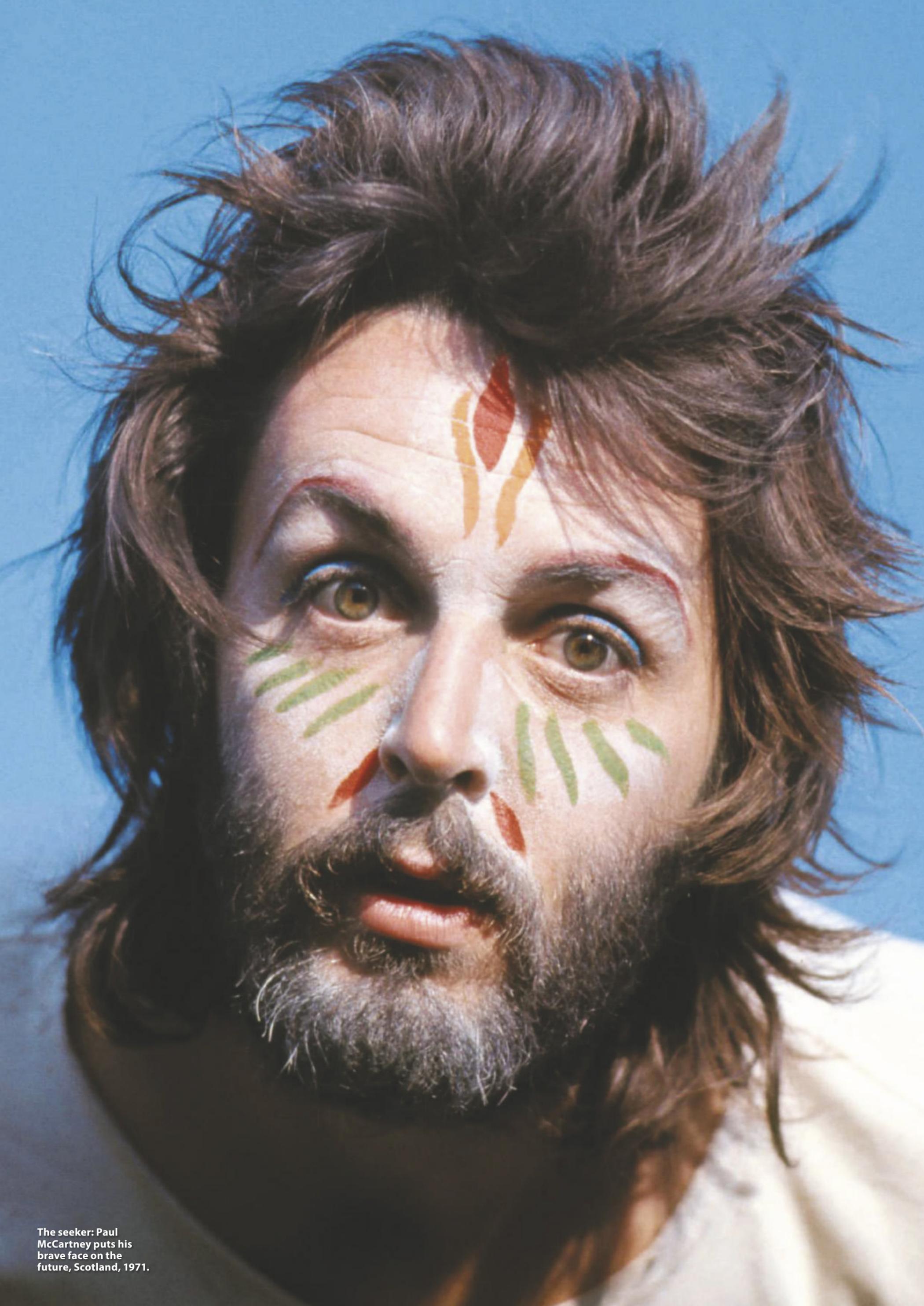
We leave Paul Weller in the Black Barn office, surrounded by the framed discs of his fabled career, head cocked to one side, holding his chin as he weighs up his vaccinated future, caught up in the whirlwind of his ever-changing moods. He knows it’ll be all right. He got this far without any serious hitches.

**S**IX DAYS LATER, AT 22:58 ON SUNDAY, A TEXT ARRIVES from Paul Weller. He wants to make sure we’ve understood the idea behind his album’s title track, *Fat Pop*. The message reads:

*“As I was ruminating earlier can I add that my gratitude to music is boundless. I’d still be scratching about in my old town if it wasn’t for music! I possibly would never have travelled, met so many great people from all over the world, seen beyond the confines of the UK & how much we have in common. When soul heads say ‘keep the faith’, that’s exactly what it is: a faith. Pure & simple. Music’s forever giving, it’s a living thing, it’s not started wars (fights, yeh), it cuts through all cultures, it’s information, education, entertainment. And generally it tells the truth! That’s all... just had to say that! X”*

The heart has many desires, but for Paul Weller there is just one constant, uncomplicated, life-long love. That’s just how he is and why he needs you so.





The seeker: Paul McCartney puts his brave face on the future, Scotland, 1971.



# FREEDOM SUITE

Fifty years ago, PAUL McCARTNEY said ta-ra to The Beatles and hello to *Ram*, the eccentric, tune-packed solo album that may still be his best. Cue: entomological controversy, grief with John, but a path, eventually, to solo satisfaction. “It was a wacky thing, y’know,” he told TOM DOYLE.

Portrait by LINDA McCARTNEY.

**M**ARCH 1971 AND PAUL McCARTNEY WAS IN LOS ANGELES, TRYING to lie low. While the local press speculated whether he was in town to shoot a US TV special with a new band, or if he’d indeed already left LA and flown to Hawaii, McCartney bunkered in Sound Recorders on Yucca Street in Hollywood, in the shadow of the ringed storeys of the Capitol Records building, putting the final touches to his second post-Beatles album, *Ram*.

He only broke cover once, at the Grammys on March 16, rolling up to the podium, hand-in-hand with Linda, to accept an award for *Let It Be* from movie legend John Wayne. Outside, when leaving, a reporter caught up with Paul for a quote. “I have a knife and fork and I’m here to cut a record,” he quipped before speeding off in a Cadillac to the sound of fans screaming on the sidewalk.

It wasn’t long before Beatles devotees tracked McCartney down to Sound Recorders. Some left gifts for him, others had to be gently escorted away by members of the LAPD. One day in the studio, Paul stuck on a pair of shades and announced to startled engineer Eirik Wangberg that he was popping out for a stroll along Hollywood Boulevard. Not long after, the still-newly-ex-Beatle returned, bursting into mock tears before grinning: “No one recognised me!”

What else was he doing in LA? Perhaps, partly, living out fantasies harboured during The Beatles’ mid-’60s game of creative one-upmanship with The Beach Boys. The McCartneys were staying in a beachside Santa Monica house rented from the Getty family, and together with Linda at the microphone in the studio, Paul was layering distinctly *Pet Sounds*-like harmonies on some of the new tracks, purposely echoing the 1966 album he would later assess as “the classic of the century... unbeatable in many ways.”

In marked contrast to his self-recorded *McCartney* solo debut, *Ram* was to be a far lusher and more hi-fi affair. “Well, Hollywood is Hollywood,” Eirik Wangberg – dubbed ‘The Norwegian’ by McCartney – tells MOJO today. “This is where Paul wanted to come, and *Ram* is the sound he naturally got there.”

And Wangberg should know – the London-born, Oslo-raised engineer had already scored credits for The Beach Boys (*Smiley Smile* and *Wild Honey*), Buffalo Springfield and The Mamas & The Papas. “The album sounds more intricate, deep and wide than the home-made *McCartney*,” adds Wangberg. Moreover, it was McCartney’s first concerted effort to distance himself musically from The Beatles.

“Absolutely,” Macca told your writer decades later. “Definitely trying to do something else. To have to invent something new was difficult, y’know. But I just felt like that was the way to go. I just wrote in a different direction and tried to avoid any Beatles clichés.

“So, the songs became, I dunno, a little more episodic or something like that,” he added. “I took on that kind of idea a bit more than I would’ve with The Beatles. I suppose I was just letting myself be free.”



© Paul McCartney/Photographer: Linda McCartney



**Don't let me down: (from left) Linda and Paul McCartney receive Grammys from John Wayne, March 16, 1971; the McCartneys, Royal Courts of Justice, February 19, 1971; Allen Klein (on left) leaves same court.**



◀ Moreover, the sunshine vibes helped to counteract the hangover from The Beatles' court battle. While that had concluded only days before – on March 12 in London – and with a ruling in McCartney's favour, dark clouds lingered.

"I could tell that Paul was under stress," says Wangberg, "even though he acted very professional, calm and focused in the studio. Y'know, he did not know how and where his career would go after The Beatles. This was a chancy period for him.

"Paul wouldn't talk about his troubles, though. We were in the studio to make a great record. Linda didn't even want Paul and I talking about The Beatles: 'Stop it, we want to look forward!'"

Indeed, even the title of *Ram*, which had come to McCartney some months earlier when driving through rural Scotland, denoted propulsive force and onward motion. "It meant," he explained, "ram forward, press on, be positive."

**F**IVE MONTHS EARLIER, OCTOBER 1970, PAUL, LINDA and the kids (Heather, seven; Mary, one) boarded the SS France in Southampton, bound for New York. The Beatles had never recorded in American studios and it was clearly a time for new horizons and experiences.

David Spinozza was a studio guitarist on the New York R&B scene, bagging most of his session gigs through a booking outfit called the Radio Registry. One day he received a call from someone he took to be a new girl at the agency. "She called my house and she said, 'Oh, this is Linda,'" Spinozza remembers today. "My husband would love to get together with you and play.' I remember saying, 'Well, who's your husband?' I really didn't know who it was (*laughs*). She might have said, 'McCartney', but for some reason I just didn't put it together with Paul McCartney in my head."

Spinozza was duly invited to a rundown loft rehearsal space on W. 45th Street. It was a surprisingly grimy setting for a former Beatle, and an indication that McCartney was keeping things low-key. "As you know, they were still very famous," says Spinozza. "I don't think they could just walk down the street that easy without being accosted by fans."

Expecting a jam session, Spinozza was quietly annoyed to find himself in a waiting room alongside other session guitarists. He realised it was in fact an audition. When he was summoned upstairs into the practice space, he was tasked with strumming the relatively simple acoustic chords for what Spinozza later realised was *Another Day*, the single that would precede the album.

Subsequently, he'd hear on the sessioneer grapevine that other New York musicians had been similarly affronted by having to try out for McCartney. "Some of the studio drummers were really belligerent," he laughs. "Like, they'd say to Paul, 'Well I heard you play a little drums. Why don't you play some drums?'"

A more amenable drummer was found when Denny Seiwell turned up, slightly alarmed, at what he remembers as a "burned-out building" in another, sketchier location on W. 43rd. He tentatively walked down the stairs into the basement to find Paul and Linda and a bashed-up set of rented drums. "They said, 'Do you mind playing for us?'" Seiwell recalls. "And I just went right into Ringo on the tom toms."

The preliminary sessions for *Ram* were conducted on the other side of Midtown, in the more salubrious surrounds of Columbia's

Studio B, where a daily routine quickly developed. Paul and Linda, always with the kids, would arrive and install a playpen for Mary in the control room.

"I wasn't used to children being in the studio," Spinozza admits. "So, that was at first a little distracting to me. The children were there the whole time, and Linda was basically attending to them and Paul was showing us the music. It wasn't like we hung out or smoked pot together."

Day one, McCartney, Spinozza and Seiwell cut *Another Day*, the daydreamy tale of an office-working girl – Eleanor Rigby transported to Manhattan, reckoned the drummer. As the weeks of nine-to-five sessions progressed, Paul would play through a song each day for the others and they'd work for hours to achieve a band feel before pressing the record button.

"Immediately what dawned on me was how good the songwriting was," says Spinozza. "I couldn't believe how well Paul could sing the melodies to these songs, and sometimes even change the melody. He would just sing it different each time."

"I'd never seen that kind of talent before," agrees Seiwell.

But while *Ram* was to be the sole album jointly credited to Paul and Linda McCartney, the musicians admit that the latter's musical input was not so obvious at this stage.

"She never really played," says Spinozza. "I didn't ever hear her play anything or even sing anything. We just basically cut the tracks with Paul singing a dummy vocal."

Denny Seiwell's take is that Linda's contribution was far more significant: "She was the one that got Paul off of his ass when he was having to sue the other Beatles. His heart was broken. He would've sat up there in Scotland and just become a drunk. She said, 'Come on, you're a songwriter. Let's go to New York and make a record.' If she hadn't got on his case, *Ram* never would've been made."

"Linda was great," McCartney would confirm. "She just eased me out of it and just sort of said, 'Hey, y'know, you don't want to get too crazy.' And made me feel a lot better. And then I moved again into music therapy, which was *Ram*."

As the songs flowed, it was clear to the participants that *Ram* was shaping up to be far more ambitious than *McCartney*. Spinozza was taken aback by run-throughs of the multi-movement Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey: "I remember thinking, 'Wow, this is an incredible piece of music, with all the tempo changes.'" Significantly, McCartney was now freed from argumentative bandmates and fully in charge as he marshalled his hired hands – with the late Hugh McCracken in place of Spinozza, who had moved on to other bookings.

"So, if I wanted to do *Monkberry Moon Delight* with 'a piano up my nose', then I figured, 'That'll be OK,'" McCartney reasoned. "Now I can do that kind of thing. To give everyone their credit, I think everyone felt that way, y'know. George felt that way about *All Things Must Pass*. I'm sure John did."

In spite of his desire to turn a fresh page, a Beatle-y imprint can be heard on *Ram*, as well as a playful experimentation. On *Oh Woman*, *Oh Why*, a rocker with a murder theme destined for the B-side of *Another Day*, McCartney even used a revolver to overdub gunshots.

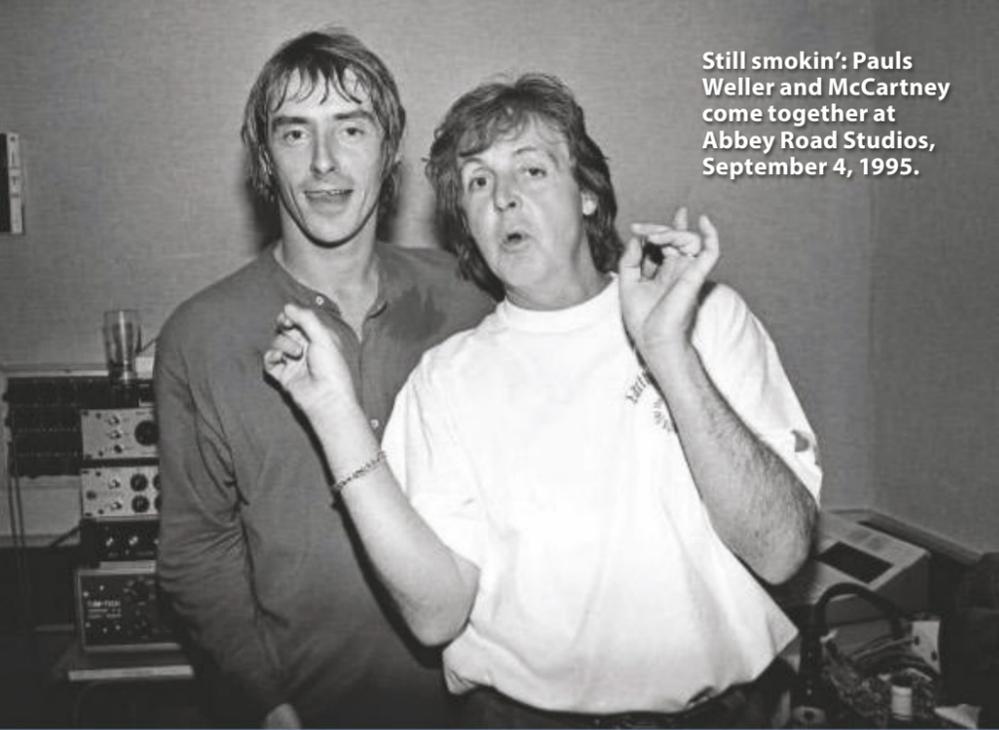
At Phil Ramone's A&R Recording, working from arrangements scored in London by George Martin, McCartney conducted the New York Philharmonic on *Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey*, the similarly episodic *Long Haired Lady* and gold-standard McCartney ballad *The Back Seat Of My Car*. Martin had urged Paul to chart the tracks ➤

**“I TRIED TO AVOID  
ANY BEATLES CLICHÉS.  
I SUPPOSE I WAS JUST  
LETTING MYSELF BE FREE.”**

**McCARTNEY**

**Piece of cake:  
McCartney lets it rip,  
Columbia Studio B,  
New York, 1970.**





Still smokin': Pauls Weller and McCartney come together at Abbey Road Studios, September 4, 1995.

# PAUL ON PAUL

**Weller and Macca, a lifelong bromance, by PAUL WELLER.**

WHEN DID Paul McCartney come into my life? It would have been November 1963 – the Royal Command performance. My mum had bought the singles – definitely *She Loves You* – but that was the first time I saw them on the box. And that was it for me. Even at the age of five I thought, “This is amazing,” and it’s never changed for me, it’s never ever faltered.

The Beatles taught me everything: musically, but also about the power of imagination. Look outside your little village or city walls, to see that there’s something outside, beyond. And question everything: you don’t have to just accept what you’re supposed to accept. They were everything and they kind of still are. Bono said they were the Big Bang and I think that’s true. Forget about Elvis. The Beatles wrote their own songs, they were self-contained, they led the way.

Even the other day, someone was playing *Tomorrow Never Knows* in the studio on the big speakers. God knows how many times I’ve heard it but I was instantly, “Fuuucking hell! Does it get any better than this tune?” And this was not even four years after *Please Please Me*. The giant steps, the incredible innovations in such a short space of time...

When did I start being ‘Paul’? That was my mum. I was christened John but my mum changed her mind two weeks later and started calling me Paul, and I was awful glad she did. The Macca connection was always important to me. The fact he’s a Gemini, like me, I took as a sign. And he had a chipped tooth, like me [Macca chipped his in a moped crash on the Wirral, Boxing Day, 1965]. And I thought, That’s another sign. I was always looking for comparisons. When I started playing, I was playing guitar, but then I wanted to play bass to be like

Macca, but I found I couldn’t sing and play bass at the same time, so I changed back.

Favourite Macca bits? Well one of my favourite bass lines is actually *Tomorrow Never Knows* – based mostly on that one note, like a precursor to trance music, a riff that goes round and round like a mantra – fucking ingenious. And a song? For *No One* – how amazing is that, both melodically and lyrically?

The first Macca solo album, *McCartney*, I love that: the lo-fi vibe and Macca’s funky drumming. But *Ram* is a fantastic album too. There are so many good tunes on it – *Dear Boy* is one of his best ever, kind of a *Martha My Dear* vibe. And there’s an edginess in the music and the production before the sophistication of *Wings* comes in. I like my Macca raw.

When he did *Come Together* with us [ie. *The Smokin’ Mojo Filters*, on *The Help Album*, 1995] we were

“The fact he’s a Gemini, like me, I took as a sign. I was always looking for comparisons.”  
**WELLER**



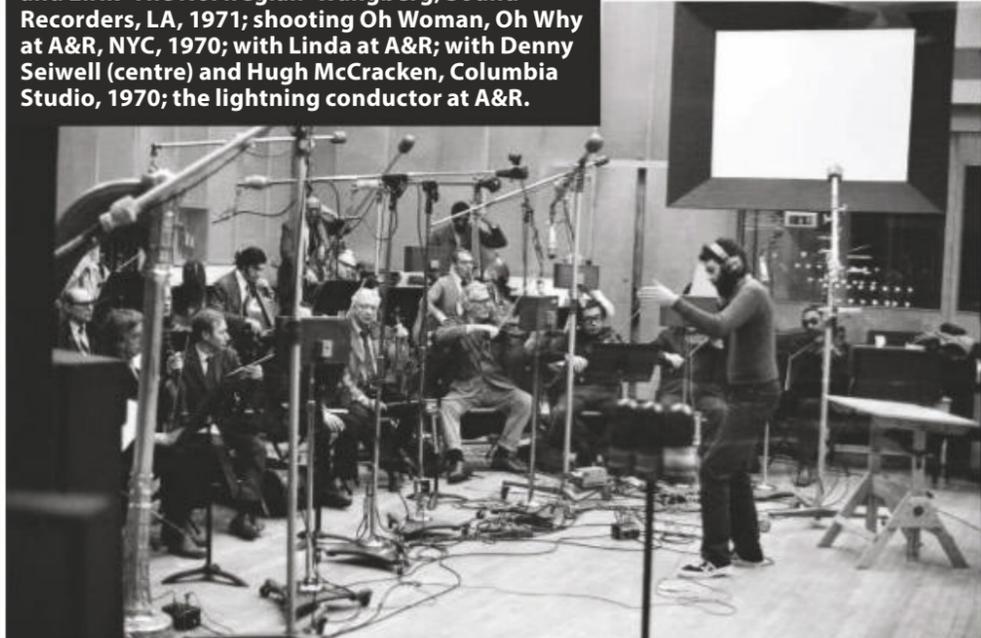
shitting ourselves, so we recorded the backing track ahead of time: “Let’s get this down at least.” But when Macca came in he was great. He played some guitar on it, and Wurlitzer, and he did some BVs with us. I was nervous, you know, to ask him to do another take – like, with a bit more bass on the guitar – but he was cool about that too.

I played with him at the Royal Albert Hall in 2012, at a Teenage Cancer Trust gig. We were backstage and he was saying to Ronnie Wood, “You should come on and play guitar on *Get Back*,” and I was behind Woody, going, “And, er, maybe me?” “Oh all right, and you as well.” And I was like, “Yes!” I don’t think you could hear my guitar but I was on-stage with Macca and that was good enough for me.

As told to Danny Eccleston



Studio animal: (clockwise from above) Macca and Eirik ‘The Norwegian’ Wangberg, Sound Recorders, LA, 1971; shooting *Oh Woman, Oh Why* at A&R, NYC, 1970; with Linda at A&R; with Denny Seiwell (centre) and Hugh McCracken, Columbia Studio, 1970; the lightning conductor at A&R.



for orchestra himself, but the singer insisted, “Why should I when I have you?”

David Spinozza would go on to play with John Lennon on 1973’s *Mind Games* and so finds himself in the unusual position of having worked on solo albums with both Lennon and McCartney. “They were both very biz-like,” he says. “Paul took a little more time with the production. John liked to work fast. Paul was into a lot of the detail. He was always looking for a special, special sound.”

ON FEBRUARY 19, 1971, WHEN ANOTHER DAY was released in the UK as a taster single from the New York sessions, McCartney was in London, sporting the dark grey Tommy Nutter suit he’d worn on the cover of *Abbey Road*, attending the opening hearing of The Beatles & Company partnership case at the High Court. As he later told me, all he could really think was, “Jesus, am I really going through this?”

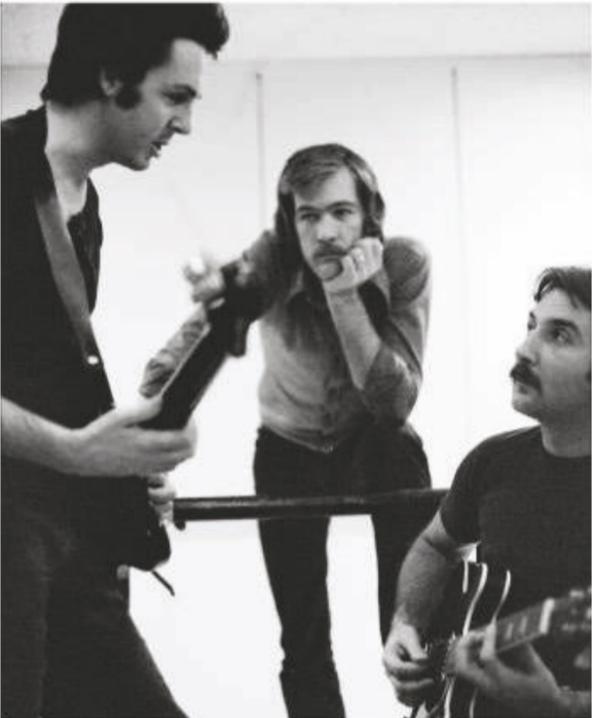
It was the only date on which he would appear. None of the other Beatles showed for the near-month-long proceedings, preferring to have their statements read out in court. But McCartney was determined to block Allen Klein – representing the other three – from seizing full control of the band’s affairs: “I was the lone voice, y’know. So, it was really painful because I knew I had to stand up. Apple would’ve by now been called ABKCO [Klein’s company]. I realised that everyone didn’t get it, but they sort of felt secure in the middle of this thunderstorm.”

His mess of bitter and confused emotions spilled over into one song in particular on *Ram*. Gently driving groover *Too Many People* laid into what he perceived as the “preaching practices” of John and Yoko and even opened with the words “piss off”.

“Well, it doesn’t actually say, ‘piss off’,” McCartney argued. “‘Piece of cake’ it says, which was thinly disguised as ‘piss off, cake.’ And hey, come on, how mild is that? It’s not exactly a tirade, is it? ‘Too many people preaching practices’... I felt that was true of what was going on. ‘Do this, do that.’”

“At the time, I wouldn’t have minded if the preaching of the practices were wise. ‘Do this, do that, and y’know, you’ll make good music and Allen Klein won’t steal your company.’ To me, the fool-

# “IF LINDA HADN’T GOT ON HIS CASE, RAM NEVER WOULD’VE BEEN MADE.” DENNY SEIWELL



ishness that was going on was not something to be followed, y’know?”

Later, the public and even the other Beatles would hear digs in other *Ram* tracks, including 3 Legs. To be fair, it was easy to interpret the lines “My dog he got three legs/But he can’t run” and “I thought you was my friend/But you let me down” as pops at his ex-bandmates. McCartney insisted, however, that 3 Legs was “just kind of a joke blues song in my mind. *Everything* was being interpreted.”

Others speculated that Dear Boy was directed at Lennon, when in fact McCartney had had Linda’s first husband, Joseph Melville See Jr, in mind, as he reflected on a rival who didn’t “know how much you missed”. But one other track *did* feature a deliberate Beatles reference, when McCartney’s fleeting Silver Beatles stage name Paul Ramon – also his pseudonym when he guested on Steve Miller’s *My Dark Hour* in ’69 – was twisted into Ram On. Here he really did sound like he was imparting advice to his younger self: “Give your heart to somebody soon/Right away.”

Although still only 28 when he wrote the songs on *Ram*, McCartney clearly had a lot of emotions to work through. “Like I say, that was my saviour,” he would tell me. “Just making tracks.”

**B**ACK IN CALIFORNIA AT SOUND RECORDERS IN spring 1971, McCartney belied his controlling reputation by giving Eirik ‘The Norwegian’ Wangberg a surprising amount of latitude in the final shaping of *Ram*. On Long Haired Lady, Wangberg boldly stripped away extended passages of George Martin’s orchestration. “I thought it was a bit tedious during a long run,” he says today. “So I built the music from the ground up again, bit by bit, as the final section repeated. I turned towards Paul and saw tears running down his cheeks. Then I knew the mix was a winner.”

Wangberg also removed the orchestra from the raucous, Beatle-y coda of The Back Seat Of My Car, then got in touch with Universal Pictures to request sound effects tapes of thunderstorms, which he added to Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey.

In return, McCartney unveiled for Wangberg some of the free-

wheeling production techniques The Beatles had pioneered. On slightly daft bluesy rocker Smile Away, McCartney broke all the rules, asking the engineer to fuzz up his bass before adding overdub upon overdub. “This showed me how The Beatles had been thinking untraditionally when recording their music,” Wangberg says.

In years to come, both Michael Jackson and Elton John would compliment Paul and Linda McCartney on the unique character of their vocal harmonies. From behind the desk at the time, as their tracks went down to tape, Wangberg was equally impressed, particularly with the elaborate interweaving on Dear Boy. “I had worked with The Beach Boys on [Smiley Smile’s] Vegetables,” he reminds MOJO, “but Dear Boy took the cake.”

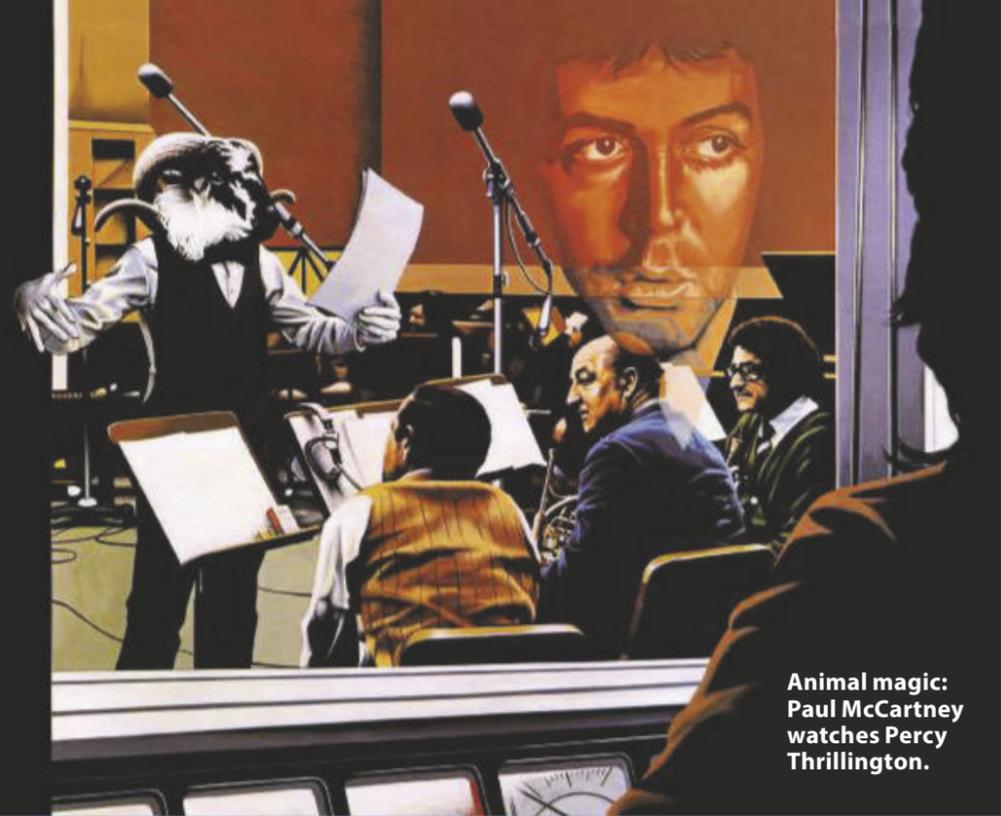
In a last remarkable act of trust, McCartney allowed Wangberg to make the final song selection and sequence the running order. Then, before the first full playback, McCartney insisted they all toast the completed album with 12-year-old Johnnie Walker. As The Back Seat Of My Car faded to a close, the McCartneys hugged one another, before adding Wangberg to the clinch and weeping with joy and relief. The latter now views *Ram* as “Paul’s family album. He needed this closeness after The Beatles.”

As slick as it was, *Ram* was also deeply quirky, with its in-joke lyrics and stylistic about-turns. Underlining the point, the McCartneys pressed up 500 copies of a one-sided vinyl radio promo titled Brung To Ewe By, intended as 15 intro jingles for DJs to use when playing *Ram* songs, with sheep noises, nonsense spoken word and a repeated piano ditty not on the album, Now Hear This Song Of Mine.

The cover artwork for the LP was similarly eccentric, with Macca’s childlike felt-tip scribbles framing a shot of him wrestling with a ram on the McCartneys’ High Park Farm in Scotland, alongside the cryptic message L.I.L.Y. (later revealed to be Linda, I Love You).

But it was a nature shot, featured twice on the back of the sleeve, of two beetles copulating, that raised eyebrows. It was a coded message that seemed to say: fucking Beatles. McCartney later assured me that it hadn’t been intentional.

“No, I swear to God,” he laughed. “Things like that seem so ➤



Animal magic: Paul McCartney watches Percy Thrillington.

## CLASSICAL GASSER

Six years after it was recorded, in the teeth of punk, *Ram*'s easy-listening alter-ego emerged. TOM DOYLE revisits the mysteries of *Thrillington*.

THROUGHOUT 1976-77 a series of personal ads began sporadically appearing in the pages of *The Times* and the *Evening Standard* announcing, society notice-style, the movements of one Percy Thrillington. One typical example read: "Percy Thrillington wishes to advise friends that he is feeling thoroughly invigorated by the crisp and brisk skiing conditions in Gstaad."

The prankster ads were soon revealed to be advanced hype for the release of the *Thrillington* album in April 1977, a pop orchestral version of *Ram* supposedly conducted by the titular arranger, who was, of course, a fictitious character created by Paul and Linda McCartney. Still, even when the album featured an illustration on its back cover depicting the former reflected in a recording studio window, an EMI press officer attempted to maintain the ruse with the denial, "Percy Thrillington certainly isn't Paul McCartney as some people seem to think."

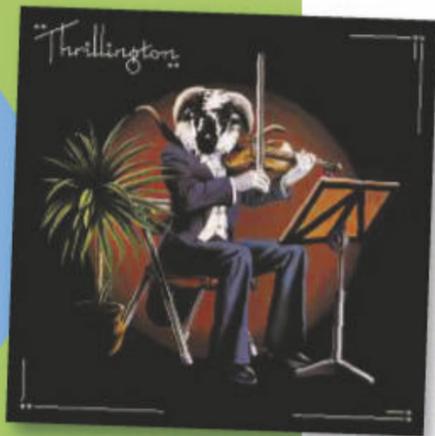
*Thrillington* had in fact been made six years before, in 1971, and left in the can. A "madcap idea" of McCartney's ("Substances were involved," he confessed), he'd employed arranger Richard Hewson to cover the entire album in an easy-listening style. Hewson had first worked with McCartney on his production of Mary Hopkin's 1968 UK Number 1, *Those Were The Days*, before being employed by Phil Spector on *Let It Be* to add the controversial orchestrations to *I Me Mine* and *The Long And Winding Road*. "Paul must have forgiven me," reckons Hewson today. "He called me up and said, 'Do an orchestrated version of *Ram*.' No more instructions than that."

*Thrillington* was duly recorded in three days at Abbey Road Studio 2, featuring session luminaries including drummer Clem Cattini and bassist Herbie Flowers, with McCartney offering casual directions from the control booth.

Hewson was more of a jazz buff than a pop fan and so brushed up on his Beatles before the sessions. Hence the Mike Sammes Singers' spoken word gobbledegook on *Too Many People* and the eerie *Fool On The Hill*-style recorders picking out the melody of *Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey*.

"Obviously, I did a bit of

"I thought it was a bit silly. He would've been better to put it out as a Paul McCartney album."  
RICHARD HEWSON



research," says Hewson. "Working with Paul, I thought, I'd better do my homework, see what sort of stuff he does anyway. I checked out some Beatles, so I obviously picked up a few influences of the sort of thing that he was into."

The arranger completed the project and thought no more of it, before he was alerted in 1977 to the fact that the album was to be finally released as *Thrillington*. For his part, he doesn't feel its strange marketing campaign helped the record.

"I thought that was a bit silly," he says. "It didn't ring true at all. He would've been better to put it out as a Paul McCartney-produced instrumental album. It would've done a lot better, I think."

Podcast *The Crunch: The Story Of Richard Hewson* is available now.



Riddle me, Ramon: Macca's cryptic sleeve notes to Linda (above), and (right) his erstwhile Beatle bandmates... allegedly.

obvious afterwards. You go, 'Oh yeah, of course, that must have seemed like that.' A photograph of two beetles shagging. I mean, that *had* to get on the cover. Then afterwards, you go, 'Oh, but they were *beetles*.' To me they were just a couple of little ladybirds or insects or something, y'know. It was just a really funny shot."

NONETHELESS, SOME OF HIS FORMER BANDMATES didn't react at all well to the album. "I don't think there's one tune on *Ram*," said Ringo upon the album's release. "I just feel he's wasted his time. He seems to be going strange. It's like he's not admitting he can write great tunes."

Lennon, of course, went further. Commenting on *Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey*, which became McCartney's first solo US Number 1 single, he said, "I liked the beginning. I liked the little bit of 'hands across the water', but it just tripped off all the time. I didn't like that bit." His real ire he saved for his own *How Do You Sleep?*, recorded for the *Imagine* album at the end of May, less than 10 days after the release of *Ram*. Full of blatant gibes ("The sound you make is muzak to my ears"), the song upset McCartney deeply.

"It was a massive, massive bug," he would tell MOJO. "I was just really *sad*, y'know, 'cos there we were... we'd worked together, we'd loved each other – although you wouldn't have called it that then. But we'd been really tight mates since about 16 or something. So, it was a very, very strange turnaround."

Lennon twisted the knife by including in the *Imagine* album package a postcard of him grappling with a pig. Elsewhere, the critics, perhaps expecting the smooth, radio-friendly side of McCartney, weren't impressed by the oddities of *Ram*. *Rolling Stone* dismissed it as "monumentally irrelevant", while *Melody Maker* reasoned, "It must be hell living up to a name... you expect too much from a man like McCartney."

In a revealing side move, McCartney claimed that six of the 12 songs on *Ram* had been straight 50/50 co-writes with Linda, sidestepping the terms of his agreement with The Beatles' publishing company Northern Songs, now owned by media magnate Lew Grade's ATV. Grade felt that McCartney was trying to pull a fast one and slapped him with a lawsuit for \$1 million, a dispute not settled until the singer made the James Paul McCartney TV special for Grade in 1973.

*Ram*, meanwhile, was a commercial success, Number 1 in the UK albums chart and Number 2 in the US. Half a century on, it has been critically re-evaluated as perhaps McCartney's greatest post-Beatles album. While the general public might favour the hits of Wings' *Band On The Run*, *Ram* is the aficionados' choice: the sound of Paul McCartney gleefully revelling in his creative freedom. "I like the fact that people will come up to me and say, 'I love that *Ram* album,'" said its creator. "Or Wings' *Wild Life*. 'Cos, y'know, what you find now is people like the obscure stuff."

Ultimately though, for Macca himself, *Ram* seemed to represent vindication and proof that there was life – and a career to be had – after The Beatles.

"It was doubtful, it was never a *fait accompli*," he told me. "Another impossible ingredient was to take my missus, who had no [musical] experience whatsoever, to accompany me on this adventure. And it was a wacky thing, y'know. But come on, man, we were hippies." M

*Ram*, The 50th Anniversary Edition on limited edition half-speed mastered vinyl, is released on May 14.

# MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY JENNY BULLEY [jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk)



## CONTENTS

### 80 ALBUMS

- Swamp songs: Dan Auerbach and the late Tony Joe White
- St. Vincent's superfly '70s-stoked *Daddy's Home*
- Squid's cephalopodic-motorik thrills
- Brit jazz wonderworkers Sons Of Kemet
- Plus, The Black Keys, Teenage Fanclub, Tony Allen, Lisa Gerrard, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Natalie Bergman, Toumani Diabaté and more.

### 92 REISSUES

- Spiritualized: *Lazer Guided Melodies* is still glowing strong
- *The Who Sell Out* one last time
- Under the influence of The Nightingales
- Philadelphia International Records boxed
- File Under: *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band*. Or, his pain, our gain
- Plus, Impulse! buys on vinyl, Fleetwood Mac live, P.J. Harvey, huh? Peggy Lee, The Yardbirds and more.

### 103 SCREEN

- The country trio: Guy Clark, Susanna Clark and Townes Van Zandt's relationship explored
- Plus, New Order live, Creation Stories, Poly Styrene and more.

### 105 BOOKS

- Words of expectation: a trio of books about The Fall
- Plus, Steve Davis, Bob Dylan and, yes, more Bob Dylan.

## INDEX

Allen, Tony	82	Harvey, P.J.	98	Rhys, Gruff	83
Balmorhea	86	Iceage	85	Rose City Band	82
Bergman, Natalie	88	Jarrett, Keith	97	Skov, Kira	82
Berry, Matt	87	Joseph, Anthony	89	Sons Of Kemet	83
Black Keys, The	87	Juju	97	Speace, Amy	89
Black Midi	83	Jurado, Damien	87	Spiritualized	92
Bruce Springsteen	90	Kaleidoscope	94	Squid	86
Chills, The	82	Kennedy, Sophia	86	St. Vincent	84
Cotter, Bobby	98	King, Clydie	94	Stratton, Will	88
Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young	99	KMRU	97	Superhomard, Le & Farrington, Maxwell	85
Crowley, Adrian	84	Lee, Peggy	97	Teenage Fanclub	82
Del Amitri	87	Lennon, John	96	Telex	95
Dinosaur Jr.	87	Locks, Damon	88	Tomahawk	88
Du Blonde	85	Macve, Holly	86	Toumani Diabaté	89
Fakhr, Rogér	98	Mars Volta, The	99	VA: Get On Board PIR	94
Finley, Robert	89	Microcorps	88	VA: Impulse! Records	98
Fleetwood Mac	98	Moore, Gary	94	VA: PRSNT	89
Frahm, Nils	82	Mora, Francisco	94	VA: 4AD – Bills & Aches & Blues	85
Gerrard, Lisa and Maxwell, Jules	84	Morgen	95	Vynehall Leon	88
Ghetto Priest	84	Morrison, Van	87	Weezer	85
Godspeed You! Black Emperor	83	Mould, Bob	95	Weller, Paul	88
Growing	85	Natural Information Society	83	White, Tony Joe	80
Hammill, Peter	86	Nightingales, The	95	Who, The	97
Harley, Steve & Cockney Rebel	95	Outsiders, The	99	William The Conqueror	89
		Pet Shop Boys	98	Witch Camp	84
		Pickereel, Mark	82	Yardbirds, The	98
		Rag'n' Bone Man	85		

“Confounding with ‘Litmus stained. It was nutmeg. Hup!’”

IAN HARRISON ON THE TAO OF MARK E. SMITH, BOOKS P105

# Built on a swamp

The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach has transformed a handful of the swamp king's demos into a full studio album. Can you make a polk salad out of scraps?

asks **Andrew Male**. Illustration by **Arik Roper**.

## Tony Joe White



### Smoke From The Chimney

EASY EYE SOUND. CD/DL/LP

IT WAS in 1970 when Tony Joe White first heard Brook Benton's cover of his 1967 song *Rainy Night In Georgia*. The 27-year-old Louisiana-born singer had been performing and writing since childhood, and that writing came easy, songs that somehow managed to turn his experiences of everyday Southern life into deep dark tales about life and loneliness, prejudice, love and hate. He'd spent his early twenties writing and recording for Monument Records, with one of his earliest songs, *Polk Salad Annie*, becoming a live staple for Elvis Presley throughout the 1970s. However, it wasn't until he heard Benton's "comeback" cover of *Rainy Night* that he realised something had been missing from his sound.

"I've [always] wanted revenge on that song," he told author and music scholar Andria Lisle in 2006. "I never did like my version of it. It didn't have soul in it – I was

playing guitar too fast, doing a ballad like a horse wanting to run."

That "soul" is something TJW chased for the rest of his life. In his early 1970s albums such as *Tony Joe White* (1970), *The Train I'm On* (1972) and *Homemade Ice Cream* (1973), you can hear it there in his deep sonorous voice and wild swampy guitar, flanked by David Briggs' B3, Robert McGuffie's fluid electric bass, and the massed brass ranks of Wayne Jackson and Memphis Horns. Like a lot of '70s recording artists he lost his way in the '80s and '90s, but even then he managed to cut a pretty decent disco album for Casablanca Records (ironically entitled *The Real Thang*), and write a brace of hits for Tina Turner (*Steamy Windows* and *Undercover Agent For The Blues*) that dripped with a humid intensity.

However, it was across the handful of albums White recorded during the final 20 years of his life that he got closest to revenging that Brook Benton cover. The starting point is there in 2001's appropriately titled *The Beginning*; just the then 58-year-old singer, his harmonica, his guitar, and his deep, rumbling grainy vocal working their way through songs that seemed to access something deeper and darker than the singer had ever examined before, with a trio of tracks – *Going Back To Bed*, *Wonder Why I Feel So Bad*, *Raining On My Life* – seemingly dealing with his own struggles with depression. White never again went that raw and honest across a whole album, but he would



"On White's sweaty swamp-rockers the band and Auerbach get it exactly right."

repeatedly return to that style. It became his soul. And as such, when, in the wake of TJW's death in 2018, his son and long-time manager Jody started sorting through 15 years of home recordings of mostly just White Sr and his Fender Stratocaster, the thought must have crossed his mind to release these tracks in their raw state. However, since first meeting The Black Keys in 2009, Jody White had hoped and planned for a TJW/Dan Auerbach collaboration. Which is what we have here. An album authored as much by Auerbach as it is by TJW, an album located specifically in the sound and style of the late singer's late-'60s and early-1970s albums; retro-restoration, if you will.

The attention to detail is impressive, with Auerbach bringing in such esteemed Nashville session players as keyboardist Bobby Wood [see *Back Story*], garlanded pedal-steel master Paul Franklin and esteemed country guitarist Billy Sanford to his Easy Eye Sound studio to play alongside friends and former charges like Marcus King and fiddler Stewart Duncan.

Interestingly, the album's opening track, the richly melancholy *Smoke From The Chimney*, leads

us in with the bare sound of TJW's voice and guitar and a little authentic tape hiss, but very soon we're almost in Billy Sherrill "countrypolitan" territory with Bobby Wood's sweet, lilting organ shimmering alongside the honeyed backing vocals of all-female mariachi band *Flor de Toloache*. By contrast, the next track, *Boot Money*, is a grinding slice of swamp funk about a working man who always keeps a little extra cash in his heel, but even here you wonder whether TJW would have kept it tighter, meaner, with a few less electric guitar flourishes.

It boils down to a question of which tracks suit Auerbach's lush production, and which don't. The lazy romantic heartbreak of *Del Rio You're Making Me Cry* feels perfectly at home in its hothouse production setting, a song smothered in its own sadness, but on tracks such as the conceptually overworked *Listen To Your Song* or grand country requiem *Over You*, the mood is more claustrophobic; reaching for sweeping countrypolitan grandeur but feeling more like a panic attack in a wardrobe full of *Nudie suits*. Maybe the issue is just not knowing what White wanted from these bigger, romantic numbers, but on the sweaty, swamp-rockers the band and Auerbach get it exactly right. Dark-and-stormy-night shaggy-dog tale *Scary Stories* creeps and prowls with a deep midnight groove that's thrillingly edgy, while *Bubba Jones*, a good ol' boy fishing tale of the one that got away, is transformed into a classic TJW storytelling epic, up there with the likes of *Roosevelt And Ira Lee* or *High Sheriff Of Calhoun Parrish*. What those tracks have is that elusive sense of soul that White was forever chasing, a little grit, grain and heart to go with that Nashville sound.

TJW admitted himself that his core sound was an elusive beast and so maybe we shouldn't be too surprised that not every track here captures it. As such, it's not faint praise to say that this act of restoration convinces as a good Tony Joe White album that could have been plucked from anywhere during his career. Both the shame and the joy of this project is that in those moments when Auerbach and team strip it right back to its essential parts – on *Bubba Jones*, *Boot Money* and *Scary Stories* – they sound like White at his absolute peak.



#### BACK STORY: BOBBY KEYS

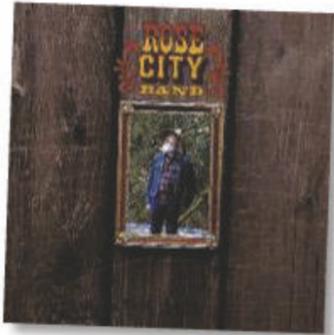
● The keyboard playing of Bobby Wood is one of the most prominent and defining sounds on *Smoke From The Chimney*. If it calls to mind such classic albums as *Dusty In Memphis*, *Elvis Presley's Back in Memphis* or *Bobby Womack's Understanding that's because Wood played on them all. A linchpin member of American Studio's Memphis Boys session players, he also defined the rich lonesome studio sound of Mickey Newbury's early '70s albums and has played with everyone else from Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash and Tammy Wynette to Wilson Pickett, The Box Tops and Joe Tex. Dubbed Elvis's favourite piano player by the King himself, the Mississippi marvel is currently 80 years old and still going strong.*

Courtesy President Records

DA

# SWAMP THANG





## Rose City Band

★★★★★

Earth Trip

THRILL JOCKEY. CD/DL/LP

**Moon Duo/Wooden Shjips wizard Ripley Johnson's lonesome adventure.**

Johnson's sublime space-rock has often been anchored around binary opposites: on Moon Duo's *Occult Architecture* (2017), *Vol. 1* explored nocturnal/daemonic themes, *Vol. 2* sunnier/transcendent moods. Where *Summerlong*, last year's second solo outing as Rose City Band, conjured July-August joys in a warm sonic glow created during winter 2019's relative optimism, this third one inevitably reflects 2020's bleaker outlook. Silver Roses opens with the bitter-sweet vibe of CSNY's *Helpless*, complete with mournful lyrics ("Bluebirds flyin'/I'm so alone") and Barry Walker's tear-jerking pedal-steel. While autumnal gems like *Rabbit* chime with recent months' universal experience of isolation and inertia, *Earth Trip* also mirrors the salvation many have found in nature (In The Rain; Lonely Places), its gentle, J.J. Cale-esque country-rock tempos evocative of restorative rustic

rambling. Though introspective and downbeat, Ripley characteristically ends on a high, as Dawn Patrol's nine-minute exploration brings new horizons and, yes, hope.

Andrew Perry



## Kira Skov

★★★★★

Spirit Tree

STUNT. CD/DL/LP

**Locally renowned Dane takes on the world. Guests include Bill Callahan.**



In Denmark, Kira Skov's celebrated status results from her being analogous to a union of Nick Cave and Patti Smith. Indeed, in regards to the latter, Skov's new duets album features the self-penned *Horses* and an appearance by Lenny Kaye. Also heard are Bill Callahan, Mark Lanegan, Lionel Limiñana and fellow Nordic luminaries Marie Fisker and Jenny Wilson. Despite periods in London and New York, and having worked with Tricky, Skov has not resonated widely beyond her native Denmark. *Spirit Tree's* admiring and rarefied cast list is enviable, yet this is her album, one oscillating between Arvo Pärt-infused folkiness and dark, trip-hop-tinted singer-songwriter excursions. Idiosyncrasy is key. The quirky Dusty Kate associates Springfield and Bush in the lyrics: "do your Kate Bush thing for me... just like Dusty." *Spirit Tree* is an international

calling card defined by Skov's innate unpredictability.

Kieron Tyler



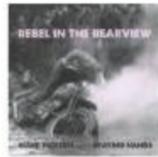
## Mark Pickerel And His Praying Hands

★★★★★

Rebel In The Rearview

BANDCAMP. DL

**Ex-Screaming Tree covers neo-torch singers' songs and country mavericks.**



For his fourth full-length with his Praying Hands collective, Mark Pickerel assembles an eclectic set of covers, refracted via his trademark blend of outlaw country ache and garage rock edge. Pickerel's selection of songs is consistently inspired, his treatments perfectly tailored. His reading of Lucinda Williams' *Essence*, a ballad equating love with drug addiction – debilitating and ecstatic in equal measures – is richly noir, Pickerel lending it a powerful Johnny Cash-esque burr, while an offbeat take of Old Brown Shoe reimagines The Beatles' blackly comic gallop as mournful bar-side Americana. Best of the bunch is a smouldering cover of Back To Black, reupholstering Amy Winehouse's neo-classic torch song with swooning country guitar and Pickerel's deliciously regretful tone. Throughout, the combination of shimmering, melancholic tremolo and Pickerel's parched twang delivers sides

with enough period vibe to be a perfect fit on Quentin Tarantino's next soundtrack.

Stevie Chick



## The Chills

★★★★★

Scatterbrain

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

**New Zealand's enduring wonky popsters put their leader's past behind them.**



*Scatterbrain* is the first Chills album since their guiding light, Martin Phillipps, laid bare the life-threatening impact of his involvement with alcohol and drugs in the 2019 documentary *The Chills: The Triumph And Tragedy Of Martin Phillipps*. Musically, this is through-and-through a Chills album, where Phillipps and his ever-mutable supporting players fuse moodiness with his instinctive feel for pop. The rolling rhythms and folksy melodies are present and correct. But *Scatterbrain* is about more than the music. "Give me the power of ancient stones," sings Phillipps on the album's opener, *Monolith*. "You're immortal, but I'll have to let you go," he declares on *You're Immortal*. Elsewhere, *Little Alien's* subject is implored to "battle on". Overall, *The Chills's* seventh album is about Phillipps drawing a line between now and what was seen on screen, gathering strength and moving forward.

Kieron Tyler

## Nils Frahm

★★★★★

Graz

ERASED TAPES. CD/DL/LP

**Neo-classical poster boy's long-buried suite of grand piano recordings.**



Nils Frahm has pushed hard at the boundaries of the pianist's craft – physically changing the form (2011's *Felt*), playing with a broken thumb (2012's *Screws*) and riffing with scale (using a 14-foot Klavins for 2015's *Solo*). This previously hidden live set, recorded in Austria in 2009, captures the German showman at his most minimal, his gift for fluid lines and rapturous melodies catching the emotions in unexpected ways on the insular, intimate *Kurzum*, while *Went Missing's* freeing refrains are as fragile as a butterfly's wings. Forthright live favourite *Hammers* shakes the reverie, its ghost of a beat enhanced by Peter Broderick's low voice, the eternal darkness of *O I End* breaking into beaming hope via a sequence of pealing, sustained notes that merge lambent classical chops with Keith Jarrett's dazzling immediacy.

Andy Cowan



## Tony Allen

★★★★★

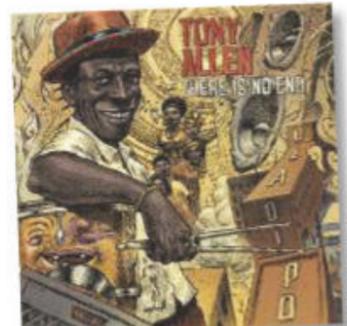
There Is No End

BLUE NOTE FRANCE. CD/DL/LP

**Last studio outing of the man who put the beat in Afrobeat is a rapper's delight.**

Before his sudden death in 2020 Tony Allen expressed his desire to give voice to a new generation of rappers, live-jamming a series of beats he heard hidden within hip-hop's most iconic tracks. Those singular takes from Fela Kuti's ex-Africa 70 bandleader are well matched here; Nah Eeto's mellow, Swahili-steeped delivery and Sampha The Great's fleet wordplay riding a peerless light jumble of snare-driven grooves, micro-rolls and fills, with much ghosting beneath the surface. Whether it's more forceful, electronically detailed efforts with The Koreatown Oddity and Danny Brown or the bristling monotonous of Jeremiah Jae and poet Ben Okri (the latter with a masterful Skepta chorus earworm), these tracks feel more like intimate conversations, with Allen's boundless curiosity shining through.

Andy Cowan



Donald Milne

## Teenage Fanclub

★★★★★

Endless Arcade

PEMA. CD/DL/LP

**After the Love has gone: beloved Glaswegians regroup.**

THE SAD departure of Gerard Love in 2018 initially seemed an insurmountable obstacle, but as far as crunch-time for a singular songwriter's circle goes, *Endless Arcade* exudes pragmatism. Norman Blake and Raymond McGinley simply divvy-up its 12 luminous songs and relish their extra air-time. The procurement of Euros Childs (Gorky's *Zygotik Mynci*; Jonny) on keyboards and additional backing vocals acts like a beautiful failsafe. Blake's relationship break-up and return to Glasgow has sparked some stupendous material, not least *The Sun Won't Shine On Me*, nodding at Sonny & Cher's *I Got You Babe*, and faith-in-people-not-God song, *I'm*



The sun is shining on them again: Teenage Fanclub.

More Inclined. Elsewhere, McGinley seems to be more philosophical than ever on *Come With Me* and *The Future*, crackers both. A searching, typically heart-

warming record about middle-aged men somewhat adrift, yet ultimately anchored to people and place, *Endless Arcade* testifies to the Fannies' endurance.

James McNair

## Black Midi

★★★★★

Cavalcade

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

**Dizzying sequel to *sui generis* iconoclasts' Mercury-nominated debut.**



One of the admirable qualities of Black Midi's 2019 debut *Schlagenheim*

was its indifference to being understood, its juxtapositions and hairpin turns leaving no space for listeners to passively consume. This follow-up is a work of similarly restless, aloof brilliance, dense with riddles to decode. Opening with John L's hurricane of staccato riffing, slashing violins and unnerving narration, *Cavalcade* careens through sinister balladry (Marlene Dietrich), apocalyptic prog (Slow) and echo-soaked art-rock set to junglist rhythms (Dethroned). Even more ambitious than *Schlagenheim*, *Cavalcade*'s wild, unstinting shifts in tone risk incoherence, but the musicians' chops and Geordie Greep's idiosyncratic vocals are always in service of a communal vision that's consistently electrifying, occasionally impenetrable and, on the closing *Ascending Fourth*, beautiful. Certainly not easy listening, then, *Cavalcade* harbours considerable thrills for those up to its challenges.

Stevie Chick

## Godspeed You! Black Emperor

★★★★★

G\_d's Pee AT STATE'S END!

CONSTELLATION. CD/DL/LP

**Cometh the hour, cometh the post-rock titans...**



Unstinting harbingers of the apocalypse for 25 years, Montreal's Godspeed

could be forgiven for making their Covid-era album a gleeful act of vindication. As the rest of us catch up with their concept of End Times, though, there's an admirable urgency rather than despondency to this seventh batch of anarcho-syndicalist post-rock: note track four's title, *Our Side Has To Win*. And while opener *A Military Alphabet* begins with a nostalgic passage of shortwave static and marches on remorselessly for 20 minutes, it's also a useful reminder of what a tremendously powerful and, in their way, accessible band Godspeed can be. For all their uncompromising aversion to the mainstream, this remains far from forbidding music, with an orchestrated heft that's as close to Ennio Morricone as it is Glenn Branca. In an alternative, better world, Hollywood soundtracks still beckon.

John Mulvey

## Gruff Rhys

★★★★★

Seeking New Gods

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

**Seventh solo quest from ever-restless wonderer.**



With records about 18th century Welsh explorers and American car magnates

under his belt, Gruff Rhys is no stranger to the concept album. *Seeking New Gods* is the highest yet, though, inspired by Mount Paektu, the volcano on the China-North Korea border. Contested land, volatile states, imminent extinction: the songs blur boundaries between the geopolitical and the psychological, crossing melancholy landscapes with a knapsack full of sustaining melodies and oxygen-rich synthesizers. Loan Your Loneliness forces Queen and Eno into a portmanteau; *Hiking In Lightning's* What Goes On thump pushes on through the heaviest weather, while the cosmic repetitions of *Distant Snowy Peaks* make just lying down and having a nap in the cold seem like a great idea. As on 2018's *Babelsberg* and 2019's *Pang!*, Rhys excels at holding anxiety and unease up to the light without becoming harsh; *Seeking New Gods* keeps that balance beautifully.

Victoria Segal

## Natural Information Society With Evan Parker

★★★★★

Descension (Out of Our Constrictions)

EREMITE. CD/DL/LP

**Best free jazz/drone/gnawa/organic house jam ever!**



The finest gig this writer saw in 2019 was a set by Natural Information Society at Café

Oto in London; a marathon, ecstatic jam for which the Chicago band were joined by ornery free jazz vet Evan Parker on soprano sax. It's a relief and a delight to discover, nearly two years on, that the show was every bit as breathtaking as it seemed at the time, thanks to this exceptional live recording. NIS's shtick is an often serene mix of spiritual jazz, minimalist composition and global trance rituals, anchored by harmony and the three-string Moroccan guimbri that core member Joshua Abrams uses for low-end vibrations in lieu of a bass. Here, though, they're in party mode, with Parker and bass clarinetist Jason Stein improvising around one another, while drummer Mikel Avery holds a relentless four-to-the-floor. Seventy-five non-stop minutes of high-end squawk and groove.

John Mulvey



Sons Of Kemet: unbroken circles.

# Wind power

Now's the time when flutes, grime and polemics combine.  
By Danny Eccleston.

## Sons Of Kemet

★★★★★

Black To The Future

IMPULSE! CD/DL/LP

THAT SONS Of Kemet are the key group at the epicentre of Britain's new jazz reverberations is unquestionable, but in some ways they are unlikely poster boys. A tuba player, two drummers, and a saxophonist in Shabaka Hutchings inclined to forego lyrical flights in favour of Morse code staccatos: these are quirky characteristics, and despite a live dynamic that appeals to rump-shakers and chin-strokers alike, their albums have been far too idiosyncratic to serve as a template for any who would follow, and *Black To The Future* is a reminder that they remain representatives of no one but themselves.

A combination of group performances cut in late 2019 – long jams that unlocked the most telepathic grooves they've yet put on record – with lockdown overdubs, most notably stacks of exotic woodwind instruments played by Hutchings (not to mention, on the track *Hustle*, a conch shell from Martinique played by tubist Theon Cross), that add dreamlike layers, it's sonically deeper and more emotionally engaging, from start to finish, than any previous SOK release. And while vocal contributions on jazz recordings tend to polarise, SOK have doubled down, with five out of 11 tracks featuring rappers and poets. Yet Kojey Radical (on *Hustle*, against Cross's sound-system-sized tuba grunt) and foundational grime artist D Double E (on

*For The Culture*) underline what is already gritty and polemical in the Sons Of Kemet sound, while Moor Mother's spooked chant on the relentless *Pick Up Your Burning Cross* is defiance incarnate. Joshua Idehen tops and tails affairs with sceptical, Last Poets-adjacent takes on white liberal empathy in the BLM age. "I do not want your equality," he states on *Field Negus*, and more challengingly, over SOK's free jazz squalls on the closing track, *Black*: "Leave us alone."

Other inspired collaborators include neo-spiritual-jazz free radical Angel Bat Dawid and venerated British tenorist Steve Williamson – shiny and fluid against Hutchings' dark mutterings on *Field Negus* – but ultimately it's the voices of SOK themselves that sound most clearly. Drummers Tom Skinner and Edward Wakili-Hick are more meshed, and visceral, than ever (it's hard to imagine the Seb Rochford-included lineup of SOK's first two albums coming on so strong) and *Cross* feels like the guardian of the group's swing, especially on the calypso-ish *Think Of Home*.

Meanwhile, Hutchings' mastery, not only of the saxophone but also in charging largely instrumental music with meaning, seems complete. Combining Caribbean rhythms, Afrocentric flutes and grime (oh, and some 'jazz') is not an accidental delineation of the songlines flowing through the African diaspora, or the problems of articulating a way forward, in terms of race and power structures, that will be heard and acted upon. On the album's standout *Let*

*The Circle Be Unbroken* his tenor becomes a desperate collage of shouts and gasps until it occurs to you, with a chill of horror, what's happening. He's choking.





St. Vincent, in a calmer place.

# West side story

Annie Clark's masterwork evokes the sights and sounds of 1970s New York City. By Tom Doyle.

## St. Vincent

★★★★★

### Daddy's Home

LOMA VISTA. CD/DL/LP

THE LAST WE saw of Annie Erin Clark AKA St. Vincent, on her Grammy-winning fifth LP *Masseduction*, she was harnessing her frantic feelings in panicky and dirty synth-pop, strapped-in tight, white-knuckling through a turbulent ascent into mainstream fame. Four years on, that state of high anxiety has abated, replaced by a far calmer state of reflection and an act of time travel to the early '70s.

The back story of *Daddy's Home* is a real one. In 2010, Clark's father was imprisoned for 12 years for his part in a \$43-million stock market manipulation. The opening verse of the title track, rendered in woozy Broadway jazz, finds her signing autographs in the prison's visitors' room, waiting for "inmate 502". The strange dichotomy between this part of her life and her Tiffany ad campaign-level celebrity is made explicit, as is the toll on Clark herself: "Yeah, you did some time/Well, I did some time too."

Clark's relationship with her dad has a greater effect on the sound of *Daddy's Home*, however, since it drove her back to his '70s record collection. Significantly, it's an album made at the Hendrix-founded Electric Lady Studios in Greenwich Village, where Clark and co-producer Jack Antonoff – brilliant here on rolling James Gadson-styled drum grooves and syncopating

Wurlitzer electric piano – have tuned into the echoes in the walls, whether left there by Stevie Wonder or, in the fuzzy, funky *Pay Your Way In Pain*, Bowie and Lennon recording *Fame*.

As a depiction of New York past, with its Donny Hathaway vibes and wandering flute and electric sitar counterpoints, *Down And Out Downtown* is vivid and beautiful, introducing recurring lyrical motifs: flowers bought in a bodega, morning journeys in last night's clothes, visions of the tops of skyscrapers. Two tracks meanwhile take a carefully-plotted trip to *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, the lovely drowsiness of *Us And Them* in the rising-from-a-blackout tale *Live In The Dream* and the even slower, druggier *The Laughing Man*, with its graphic admission, "Like the heroines of *Cassavetes*/I'm underneath the influence daily."

Touches such as these make *Daddy's Home* all the more cinematic: the individual in ... At The Holiday Party whose Gucci purse is "a pharmacy"; invoking the Andy Warhol/Lou Reed muse in *Candy Darling*, the "queen of South Queens". Elsewhere, *My Baby Wants A Baby* takes a surprising left-turn, borrowing Sheena Easton's 1980 hit *9 To 5* and giving it the quiet desperation of late-period *Abba*, while adding sly humour and fears of potential parenthood.

It's masterful stuff: a full conceptual realisation, filled with great melodies, deep grooves, colourful characterisations and sonic detail that reveals itself over repeated plays. It's also a record made

for vinyl, tailored to be heard as a label spins. But even if its heart is in the '70s, *Daddy's Home* is a keeper for the decades to come.



## Adrian Crowley

★★★★★

### The Watchful Eye Of The Stars

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND. CD/DL/LP

Irish bard's eighth album, recorded with P.J. Harvey collaborator John Parrish.

Crowley's weathered baritone and restrained elegance are seductive weapons, but he's a master storyteller too: *The Watchful Eye...* opens with, "Day one, I stole on board a northbound ship", and the spell is cast. Therein, Crowley mirrors fellow baritones Leonard Cohen and Bill Callahan's model of maximal wordage and minimal arrangement, even when an orchestra is used. The sea is a constant companion: *Ships On The Water* ebbs on a sombre guitar that's very *Street Hassle*; in a gentler *Bread And Wine*, he's "playing piano in a harbour bar", watching the crowd. On land, *Crow Song* recalls the departure of an injured bird Crowley nursed ("And I was joyous for you/But shattered none-the-less") before a funeral woodwind coda. Crowley makes enthralling company.

Martin Aston



## Ghetto Priest

★★★★

### Big People Music

RAMROCK. CD/DL/LP

Evergreen reggae and swing ballads revisited.



Sweet-voiced singer Ghetto Priest is an On-U Sound stalwart and Asian Dub

Foundation collaborator who's worked with Sinéad O'Connor and various underground outfits. Produced by Aswad's keyboardist, Carlton 'Bubblers' Ogilvie, and mixed by Adrian Sherwood, *Big People Music* explores the reggae, swing and ballads of his father's generation, reconfiguring favourites for contemporary ears. Transformations are rendered with thought and an attention to detail, with Aaron Neville's *Hercules* becoming a driving roots groove featuring moody horns, while *The Maytones' Madness* uses only acoustic guitar and a touch of strings. Slim Smith's *Blessed Are The Meek* gets a propulsive backbeat, spongy keyboards, and a dubwise mix with plenty of subtle phasing. Though the Dean Martin and Nat King Cole covers verge on the overly sentimental, everything is delivered with good

taste, the individual touches revealed on closer listening. David Katz



## Lisa Gerrard & Jules Maxwell

★★★

### Burn

ATLANTIC CURVE. CD/DL/LP

Dead Can Dancers file long-gestating venture. James Chapman of MAPS assists.



Singing in a tongue of her own creation à la Liz Fraser of Cocteau Twins, Lisa Gerrard

here collaborates with DCD bandmate/Irish theatre composer Jules Maxwell on a part-improvised album that has shades of early Vangelis, modern electronica, and Bulgarian and Anatolian folk. On *Heleali and Orion*, the operatic tics of Gerrard's voice merge with Maxwell's anthemic, cinematic music spectacularly, conjuring a gutsier, less ethereal Enya. Six years in the making, the record was seeded when Gerrard and Maxwell began writing for Bulgarian choir *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares* at home in Australia, and eventually finished with James Chapman at the suggestion of Gerrard's publisher, who noted MAPS' music, too, had "big horizons at its core". Overall, the euphoric, sometimes ambient *Burn* sounds like an enigmatic requiem; music for your own act of remembrance.

James McNair



## Witch Camp (Ghana)

★★★★★

### I've Forgotten Now Who I Used To Be

SIX DEGREES. DL

Alternative subtitle: 'Now That's What I Call Witch House, Vol 1'.



To say that Ian Brennan's musical collaborators haven't usually had easy lives

would be putting it mildly, but the records he elicits from them are far from a cheap holiday in other people's misery. These 20 short tracks, recorded in Ghanaian refuges for those accused of witchcraft, have the same electrifying intensity as his earlier releases by Cambodian and Rwandan genocide survivors or the hard-pressed albinos on Ukerewe Island. Check out the lusty whoops of *Love Please*, cathartic surge of *Witch Song* or spookily percussive backing vocals on *I Am A Beggar For A Home*. These primal statements of personal identity have melodies picked out on guitar or marimba and rhythms tapped out on handy household objects. If that's not the living spirit of rock'n'roll, I don't know what is.

Ben Thompson

Zackery Michael

**Du Blonde**

★★★★

Homecoming  
DAEMON TV. CD/DL/LP

**Beth Jeans Houghton takes control and embraces a headlong rush.**



Homecoming's punky power-pop is as unstoppable as a lava flow. Album opener

Pull The Plug partners an insistent chug with a soaring chorus line. I Can't Help You There, Medicated and All The Way are further garage pop nuggets, each with dark lyrics about disassociation, finding identity, and loss. Musically, Beth Jeans Houghton's fourth album and third as Du Blonde is at odds with the folk-pop-quirk of her 2012 debut *Yours Truly*, *Cellophane Nose* and the angular, raw and rocky approach of albums two and three. *Homecoming's* guests include Andy Bell, Ezra Furman and Shirley Manson. Adding little, they seem rather superfluous (as does learning the album was written on a guitar given to Houghton by Curb Your Enthusiasm actor Jeff Garlin). Self-recorded and self-issued, *Homecoming* arrives with its author's acknowledgments of queerness and being on antidepressants. A major marker on the path to self-determination.

Kieron Tyler



**Rag'n'Bone Man**

★★★★

Life By Misadventure  
COLUMBIA. CD/DL/LP/MC

**Rory Graham's second LP. Not like the first. At all.**

One of the more intriguing aspects of *Human*, the ragbag first Rag'n'Bone Man album, was how to follow it. Rory Graham ticked a multitude of boxes – Hozier wannabe, more earthy Gregory Porter, gospel-loving soul-blues growler, Americana maven, country-tinged rapper – all without sounding especially derivative. Admirably, in the wake of marital separation (addressed only in the unblinking *Talking To Myself*) he's taken the nuclear option, relocating to write and record in Nashville with his usual British band and a gaggle of crack sessioneers, including Prince sidekick Wendy Melvoin. Toning down the gospel-soul inflections, he's less scattergun and easier to pin down (a British Ray LaMontagne isn't too wide of the mark). More crucially, Graham's songwriting has

Jeff Bierk

blossomed, be it on the pounding *All You Ever Wanted* or the more ruminative *Alone*. All things being equal, he's heading to the major leagues.

John Aizlewood

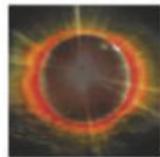


**Growing**

★★★★

Diptych  
SILVER CURRENT. CD/DL/LP

**Master purveyors of heavy ambience discover their spiritual home.**



Oblivion, might not be an immediately obvious home for an ambient record: Miller's psychedelic aesthetic has always seemed noisier and 'jammier' rather than meditative. But Olympia's *Growing* are not a typical ambient band, and for the best part of two decades they've been attacking new age-adjacent music with a punk energy akin to that of Miller, while avoiding the gothic intimations of doom that can bedevil some other practitioners of heavy drone. *Diptych* comprises two tracks of gracefully percolating hum and flicker, where sustained tones of guitars and keyboards flow effortlessly into one another, and occasional fizzles of amp-burn punctuate the dream state. Strip off the rock'n'roll trappings of *Spiritualized* circa *Pure Phase*, or tune in to Terry Riley at

his most horizontal, and you are close to the immersive pleasure here.

John Mulvey



**Iceage**

★★★★

Seek Shelter  
MEXICAN SUMMER. CD/DL/LP

**Danish punks deliver joyous scuzz rock thrills.**



From the nihilistic punk of their 2011 debut to the theatrical howl into the abyss of 2018's *Beyondless*, Copenhagen's Iceage deal in various degrees of loud and intense. Despite being recorded in a dilapidated, leaking studio (the band played amid buckets and had to wrap mikes in dishcloths to avoid electrocution), their fifth LP introduces a new element into their mutant rock'n'roll stew – joy. Producer Pete Kember brings much of the narco gospel fire of Spacemen 3 (not least in the inclusion of May The Circle Be Unbroken in *High & Hurt*) and throughout *Seek Shelter* delivers the sort of ragged MCS/Stooges/Stones cocktail Primal Scream have spent a career trying to nail. There's *Extricate* – era Fall in *Vendetta's* demented lurch and the punch-drunk *Drink Rain* could even be considered a ballad of sorts. At a time when you can't see other people, let alone be in sweaty a room full of them, it's a reminder of just how life-affirming music can be.

Chris Catchpole

**Le Superhomard & Maxwell Farrington**

★★★★

Once  
TALITRES. CD/DL/LP

**Gallic pop-psych voyager conspires with Aussie crooner.**



Despite Cass Elliot's definitive version, John Barry and Hal David's *The Good Times Are Coming* was always ripe for another take. Pleasing, then, when Christophe Vaillant (aka Le SuperHomard) and Maxwell Farrington made it the first fruit of a spontaneous collaboration in thrall to classic '60s crooners and the breezy, meticulous arrangements upon which they soared. Vaillant adjusts his palette accordingly, dialling down his customary electronic flourishes, and dialling up low-twanging guitars, clever modulations, light-orchestral strings and enough Burt Bacharach, Lee Hazlewood and Jimmy Webb-inspired nous to ensure that, were this duo to gatecrash *The Andy Williams Show* circa 1967, they'd fit right in. The twist, perhaps, is Farrington's odd and unique lyrical voice, full of arresting couplets on *We, Us The Pharaohs, Oysters*, and *North Pole*, wherein the world-weary protagonist fears being eaten by a polar bear.

James McNair

**Weezer**

★★★★

Van Weezer  
CRUSH MUSIC/ATLANTIC. CD/DL/LP

**A pop-metal record dedicated to the late Eddie Van Halen.**

"Look like you could have been in *Faster Pussycat*," sings Rivers Cuomo on *Precious Metal Girl*. Like most of *Van Weezer's* concise songs it finds Cuomo and his bandmates mourning a denim-and-Spandex-clad adolescence. *All The Good Ones* [are gone] documents romance at the mini-mart, Joan Jett-style, *Blue Dream* purloins the riff from *Ozzy Osbourne's Crazy Train*, and *I Need Some Of That* recalls a summer riding pushbikes and listening to *Aerosmith*. The sentiments charm and Cuomo's nose for a tune endures, but the drive-time metal supremacy of *Def Leppard* and *Mutt Lange* is never under serious threat. To these ears, the standout is still *The End Of The Game*, a 2019 single paying warm tribute to the EVH playbook. "I know that you will crank this song/Air-guitaring with your headphones on," opines Cuomo. Rumbled!

James McNair



**Various**

★★★★

Bills & Aches & Blues

4AD. CD/DL/LP

**Self-starting 41st anniversary celebration from pioneering label.**

THIS RECORD'S concept is simple: artists on 4AD's current roster cover tracks from the label's past. When *Bills & Aches & Blues* works – and it nearly always does – it's more complex, though, pulling together the threads of an enduring artistic legacy to intriguing effect. *US Girls*, for example, take the malign buzzing energy of *The Birthday Party's Junkyard* and trap it under a glassy dreampop dome, while *Tkay Maidza* deftly trepans *Pixies' Where Is My Mind?* It's interesting to see who is chosen: no *Cocteau Twins* (although *SOHN* cover *This Mortal Coil's* version of *Song To The Siren*), but a strong showing for *Grimes*, *Deerhunter* and *The Breeders* (the latter covered by *Tune-Yards*, *Big Thief* and *Bradford Cox*). Profits from the record go to Los Angeles-based charity *The Harmony Project* for the first year, but as birthday celebrations go, this is a welcome gift for all.

Victoria Segal

Welcome gift: US Girls visit *Birthday Party's Junkyard*.





**Shapeshifters:** Squid offer a tonic for the times.



defines them best (for now), allowing scope to explore hefty trance-outs, tempo-hopping complexity and skronky weirdness en route to nailing their broad musical vision – very 2003-4 in its post-

punk jitteriness, but also achingly ‘now’, especially when topped off with Laurie Nankivell’s trumpet.

For them, as for peers Black Country, New Road, each track is a shapeshifting narrative. Here, Narrator almost anthemises that practice, going through Slint-esque twists and rhythmic evolutions, before hitting a cacophonous crescendo, then receding into industrial feedback. 2010, conversely, pinballs between Beefheartian off-centre arpeggios and Dinosaur Jr. thrash, while Boy Racers startlingly resolves into two minutes of blaring siren, right off 1973’s *The Faust Tapes*.

Fortunately, when not flipping between jarring juxtapositions, Squid excel at busting out an unfettered groove: Pamphlets concludes the album with eight minutes of Can-ish skyward propulsion – the delirious release which justifies all the foregoing tension.

Producer Dan Carey (BC, NR; Black Midi; Toy) brings cohesion to the multiplicity, while Judge, hitherto an impenetrable vocal presence, sheds light on his oblique yet acutely targeted writing, explaining how Documentary Filmmaker concerns anorexia among his friends. Elsewhere, beefs include London’s rental housing crisis (2010) and right-wing propaganda (Pamphlets).

In a time of crippling uncertainty, there’s reassurance to be gleaned from that spirit of examination, and from the accompanying music’s audacity. Squid are considering giving away promotional vitamins with *Bright Green Field*. Their ambitious record is, in itself, an absolute tonic.

# Alternative tentacles

Amphibious millennials’ thrilling post-punk/Krautrock collision.

By **Andrew Perry**.

## Squid

★★★★★

### Bright Green Field

WARP. CD/DL/LP

ON ONE OF Brexit’s many unfulfilled D-days early last year, Squid’s singing drummer Ollie Judge travelled by Megabus from London to his native Bristol. Breaking off from reading JG Ballard’s *Concrete Island* on the A4 flyover at Brentford, the yelpy mid-twentysomething soon beheld the gleamingly futuristic HQ of pharmaceuticals giant GlaxoSmithKline and was gripped by a feeling of existential dread, as if he’d awoken in a 2020 movie update

of his dystopian reading matter.

As well as informing Judge’s lyrics for GSK, the first full track on Squid’s insatiably questing debut album, he and his compadres decided to make contemporary Britain’s mood of Ballardian discomfort into *Bright Green Field*’s loosely themed purpose.

The five-man combo, who met at uni in Brighton, have thus far presented as dextrous youngsters referencing the myriad influences that Spotify has afforded them. Their smattering of EPs, singles and download one-offs confused as much as excited, packing experimental left-turns (see *Town Centre* EP opener, *Savage*) as often as exercises in thunderous motorik, like 2019’s online-only *Houseplants*.

To borrow a phrase, Squid contain multitudes, and the full context of this 55-minute, written-in-one-go long-player

certainly a fecund quality to opener *Day Dawns In Your Right Eye*, its dolorous piano chords offset by soaring high strings and Lili Cuzor’s intimate French reading from Otia Imperialia. Elsewhere, *Rose In Abstract* ebbs and flows between lugubrious pipe organ, plaintive piano and Clarice Jensen’s aching cello lines, while *The Myth*’s lattice of acoustic guitars become swathed in updraughts of wordless voices.

David Sheppard



## Holly Macve

★★★★

### Not The Girl

MODERN SKY. CD/DL/LP

**Countrified moodiness on second LP by South Coast-based singer-songwriter.**



Contemplating the death of her father on fifth track *Daddy’s Gone*, Brighton-dwelling, Irish-born Holly Macve sings “...never loved me like he should have, I never loved him like I could have.” Frankly recounting the emotional gymnastics resulting from loss, the song is musically

in keeping with the album’s downer country vibe up to this point. However, after three minutes *Daddy’s Gone* shifts into a section resonant of the Velvet’s *Heroin*. Thereafter, Macve’s second album edges towards the early solo work of Mark Lanegan with the epic *Sweet Marie* and, on pulsating *Who Am I?*, merges grunge with country. Guest guitarist Bill Ryder-Jones and string arranger Fiona Brice add subtle texture to these brooding songs. More widescreen than its largely bare-bones predecessor *Golden Eagle*, the stately *Not The Girl* refracts Mazzy Star through a Bakersfield lens.

Kieron Tyler



## Peter Hammill

★★★★

### In Translation

FIE!. CD/DL/LP

**After over 50 solo LPs, Van Der Graaf Generator’s dark star releases first covers set.**



An album of other people’s songs by this spikily individual vocalist was always going to mean more than a

few Motown retreads. And what an intriguingly eclectic set of tunes Peter Hammill has corralled – there’s a song by Mahler, Italian pop, tango, a weepie from South Pacific, and a red-blooded assault on Shirley Bassey’s showstopper *I Who Have Nothing*. His home studio arrangements can be skilful: Gabriel Fauré’s *After A Dream* ends up sounding McCartney-ish. The mood generally drips Covid-induced world weariness – Weimar cabaret comes to Wessex. But Hammill’s voice, well to the fore, is not the supple instrument it was; to really enjoy this album you’ll have to forget versions of these songs variously interpreted by Frank Sinatra, José Carreras, Jessye Norman and other stellar voices. Hardcore fans will be sold on the passion, others may struggle.

John Bungey



## Sophia Kennedy

★★★★★

### Monsters

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

**Wide-ranging second from US-German singer.**

On the follow-up to her 2017 self-titled debut, Baltimore-

born singer Sophia Kennedy comes across like a female-fronted Animal Collective one minute (the bouncing *Cat On My Tongue*), Karen Dalton transported onto a dancefloor by Giorgio Moroder the next (*I Can See You*) or Amy Winehouse playing John Carpenter (on the nightmarish *Francis*), all without pausing for breath. However, rather than making *Monsters* a record unsure of its own personality, Kennedy’s eclecticism becomes its charm. The singer constantly pulls down and reassembles a backdrop of clattering trap beats, woozy electronica, sub bass, cosmic jazz and lyrics sung in German (she was raised in Hamburg) on which to project her own ever-expanding sonic universe.

Chris Catchpole



## Balmorhea

★★★★★

### The Wind

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON. CD/DL/LP

**Texas-based duo’s eighth LP: a musical analogue for Otia Imperialia, a 13th century compendium of miracles.**

Balmorhea’s Rob Lowe and Michael A Muller conceived *The Wind* as a return to first principles – analogue instrumentals created by improvising together in a room, although a budget from classical imprint Deutsche Grammophon (and the run of Nils Frahm’s Berlin studio) has fleshed out those initial sketches considerably. The album title nods to the medieval Caesarius of Arles, no less, who allegedly transported a fertility-enhancing sea breeze to desolate places ‘shut up in a glove’. There’s

Holly Whitaker



## Dinosaur Jr.

★★★★★

Sweep It Into Space

JAGJAGUWAR. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**It ain't broke, so Dinosaur Jr. don't fix it on resonant twelfth full-length.**

Once asked why he avoided Sonic Youth-esque alt tunings, J Mascis replied that even traditional tunings often left him paralysed by choice. Certainly, Mascis's output over the last three decades has testified to the inexhaustible inspiration he's drawn from his ragged, gloriously overdriven format. But this monomania would only grate if the records weren't consistently thrilling, and *Sweep It Into Space* is another excellent instalment, spiritual offspring Kurt Vile proving an unsurprisingly sympathetic producer. As ever, seemingly gnomic phrases are rendered resonant by empathetic chord-changes, Mascis's worn croak and his emotive, primal guitar heroics, with *I Ain't's* repeated "I ain't good alone" and *Walking To You's* elegiac tremolo swoops particular moving. And Lou Barlow's contributions – the only real adjustment to Mascis's formula since his return to the fold – are both keepers, in particular the heavy, overcast folk rock of closer *You Wonder*.

Stevie Chick



## Del Amitri

★★★★★

Fatal Mistakes

COOKING VINYL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

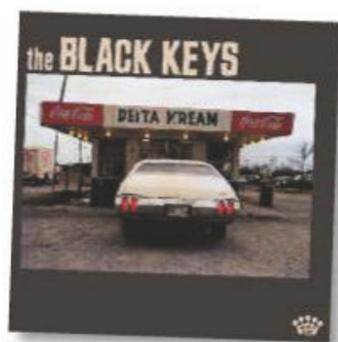
**Glasgow duo return, as bleakly catchy ever.**



It takes genuine guts for a band to open their first LP in nearly 20 years with a song called *You Can't Go Back*. Then

again, self-awareness and candour are partly what made Del Amitri so rare. Another is their flair for amplifying broad melodies with charging rock chords, fully restored here. While frontman/lyricist Justin Currie has been releasing smart, moving solo albums in the interim, they lack the group's punch. Reunited with guitarist Iain Harvie, the music swings again, even if Currie's damning viewpoint hasn't lightened. Witness post-Brexit sneer *Close Your Eyes And Think Of England* or the cliché-twist of *Losing The Will To Die*. At the same time, the group find something fresh in *A Nation Of Caners*, as grunge chords and withering words find new ways to express bile.

Jim Farber



## The Black Keys

★★★★★

Delta Kream

NONESUCH. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Their early-career blues spark is explosively reignited.**

After striking gold with 2010's gritty *Brothers* and 2011's FM-poppy *El Camino*, The Black Keys rather lost their way: 2014's *Turn Blue* was deflated by divorce and pressure; 2019's *Let's Rock* lacked, amid Dan Auerbach's solo/production hyperactivity, a vital *je-ne-sais-quoi*. Fortuitous, then, how *Delta Kream* "just happened": Auerbach, busy recording with two Mississippi blues sidemen (RL Burnside's guitar foil Kenny Brown and Junior Kimbrough's bassist Eric Deaton), called in drummer Key Pat Carney to rip through tunes that first inspired them in the '90s. The Ohio duo's mastery of the unmathematical Hill Country style oozes here from every groove, whether on the blasting Burnside-favoured *Coal Black Mattie*, or the sexy glide of *Junior's Walk With Me*. Their back-to-our-roots arc is hardly new, (cf the Stones' *Blue And Lonesome*), but this

music is timeless, alive, and about as good as it gets.

Andrew Perry



## Van Morrison

★★★

Latest Record Project Volume 1

BMG. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Someone hold his tinfoil trilby, he's going in.**



"Ain't gonna moan no more," Van Morrison sang on 2018's *The Prophet Speaks*,

and if only it were true. As with last year's parade of anti-lock-down songs, on *Latest Record Project Volume 1* the former mystic seeker of future enlightenment is now impotently throwing empty wine bottles at the present. The song titles alone tell the story: *The Long Con*; *Stop Bitching, Do Something*; *Big Lie*; *Why Are You On Facebook?* Plus, 24 (24!) more tracks that take a swipe at a modern world controlled by conspiratorial forces. *Blue Funk* is particularly clunky when rhyming its title with "mainstream media junk". Even the music is largely route-one; soft jazz R&B, a pair of comfy slippers soothing the ideological corns on clay feet. Van's 21st century output has been remarkably potent, and at 75 he's still trying to find truth, but how did such a free thinker become so calcified?

Andy Fyfe



## Matt Berry

★★★

Blue Elephant

ACID JAZZ. [CD/DL/LP/MC](#)

**The multi-instrumentalist and comic actor takes us on a mind-blowing journey.**



As befits a fan of Mike Oldfield, Berry plays all the instruments here bar the

hyperactive drums, courtesy of super-sessioner Craig Blundell. We have proggy synths, melotrons, trebly acid rock guitars, Farfisas evoking the pastoralia of early Floyd, sinister John Barryesque harpsichords, wobbly electronics like *White Noise* and generous splashes of phasing. Berry also produces with an ear to the sonics of yesteryear. *Summer Sun* lifts off with a hint of the sunshine'n'smog LA pop of 5th Dimension, and *Blue Elephant* is imbued with joy and the fun of exploration, particularly the kaleidoscopic instrumental passages. But some vocal sections aren't as strong. Although Berry strives for a psychedelic effect of "disorientation and distortion", lyrics like "It's a drag to be set on fire/I've been sacked from the choir/I came back to Bedfordshire", delivered in his aloof tones, sound more arch and detached.

Mike Barnes

# AMERICANA

BY SYLVIE SIMMONS



## Damien Jurado

★★★★★

The Monster Who Hated Pennsylvania

MARAQOPA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Own-label follow-up to last year's *What's New, Tomboy*.**

"DAMIEN IS back on Twitter, give him a shout!" it says on Jurado's website. So MOJO did and it led to a blank page – somehow sadly appropriate for an artist who's released consistently good lo-fi albums since the mid-'90s and still remains under the radar. His 20th album has production that sounds home-made, as if he's singing beside you on the sofa while the bass player, drummer and peep-y keyboard player are playing in the empty attic upstairs. The 10 new songs – slow-to-midtempo folk – are about people, most of them broken (the man who lost his soul in warm opener *Helena*; the man without the courage or the shoes to walk away in *Johnny Caravella*). Though it's not without hope. "Time we let go," Jurado's echoey voice sings in closer *Male Customer #1*, one of many highlights, that include *Hiding Ghosts* and the empty, beautiful *Minnesota*.



## ALSO RELEASED

### Shannon McNally

★★★★★

The Waylon Sessions

BLUE ROSE/COMPASS. [CD/DL/LP](#)



On this gem of an album, McNally's covers of the late outlaw country star feel as much a tribute to Waylon Jennings' attitude and independent spirit as to his music. McNally, like Jennings, has no trouble inhabiting someone else's songs. She's equally convincing on the tough 'manly' material (doesn't even change the gender on *I'm A Ramblin' Man*) as on the tender ones (*You Asked Me To*). And the band – including Buddy Miller, Rodney Crowell, Lukas Nelson, Jessi Colter – is brilliant.

### XIXA

★★★★★

Genesis

JULLIAN. [CD/DL/LP](#)



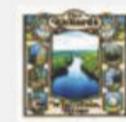
A newish offshoot of the Tucson Americana scene (this is their second full album), XIXA's sound is a mysterious mix of Arizona desert rock and psychedelic Peruvian cumbia, with propulsive drums, heavy guitars, dreamy vocals and a big dash of prog. There are traces of their Arizona forefathers *Giant Sand* in closing song *Feast Of Ascension*, and of an edgier, more out-there *Calexico* in the soundtrack-like instrumental breaks (*May They Call Us Home*). A unique, addictive album.

### Chris Richards

★★★★★

Wisconsin River

WHITE MARE. [CD/DL/LP](#)



Back in his childhood home of Sheboygan, Wisconsin during lockdown, Richards started exploring the characters and history that make up the 11 songs on his fine sixth album. Richards' voice has the warmth and honesty to carry the songs alone, though sometimes there's a light touch of harmonica, mandolin, fiddle or (on *Moon Over Michigan*) tender backing vocals. Other highlights: *Don't Let Me Die In Tennessee* and opener *Sawdust Town*, the true tale of a lethal local firestorm.

### David Huckfelt

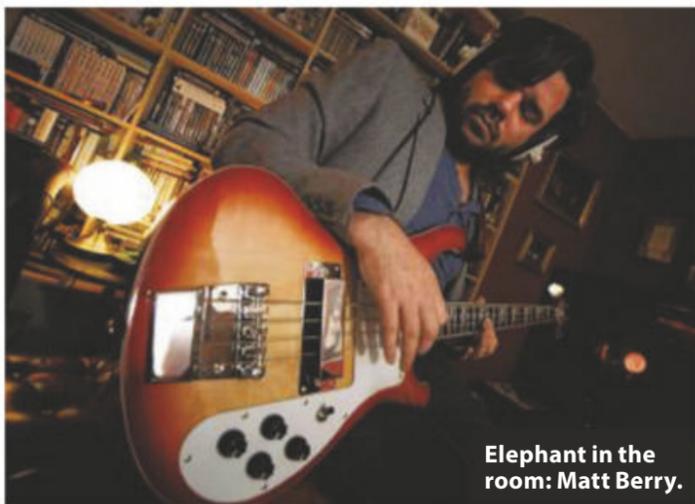
★★★★★

Room Enough, Time Enough

FLUFF & GRAVY. [CD/DL/LP](#)



Haunted landscapes and spirits are all over the ex-The Pines leader's second solo LP, as in the old American songs he covers along with new originals. *Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie*, sung like a field recording, doesn't stick to the cowboy myth but adds indigenous people into the story. Among the guests are various Native American musicians, as on a fascinating cover of Patti Smith's *Ghost Dance*; *A Satisfied Mind* is a lovely duet with Greg Brown. SS



Elephant in the room: Matt Berry.

Truth drawn from tragedy: Natalie Bergman spells it out.



**Natalie Bergman**

★★★★★

Mercy

THIRD MAN. CD/DL/LP

**Gospel-inspired response to grief from Wild Belle's singer.**

LOVE, HEALING, home, redemption: the guiding themes of Natalie Bergman's solo debut might seem reassuring, but they were triggered by tragedy. *Mercy* was

created after Bergman, a member of Chicago's Beck-approved Wild Belle alongside her brother Elliot, lost her father and stepmother in a car accident. Conceived while on silent monastic retreat, it's bathed in sacred sounds and imagery, Bergman drawing up songs from a well of gospel, soul and religious music. Yet despite its foundations in faith, *Mercy* doesn't quite feel rock-solid.



Bergman's off-beam voice hits the same indefinable receptors as Joanna Newsom or Amy Winehouse, while

Sweet Mary's thrift-store Lesley Gore or the Sunday School *Graceland* of I Will Praise You suggest that odd spiritual channel-hopping that often defines outsider art. A little strange, a little strained, *Mercy* still rings with its own truth.

Victoria Segal

**Tomahawk**

★★★★

Tonic Immobility

IPECAC. CD/DL/LP

**Mike Patton's underground supergroup celebrate 20th anniversary with fifth LP.**



Within the spectrum of Mike Patton's output – from the scabrous mutant-rock

of Faith No More, through the baroque pop of Fantomas, to the acid pastiches of Mr Bungle – Tomahawk have vented his bile as bluntly as possible. Also numbering Jesus Lizard guitarist Duane Denison and Battles/Helmet drummer John Stanier, their first new album in eight years is a characteristically unfriendly thing, rhythmically terse and bristling with ultraviolence. There's precious little subtlety, but plenty of brutish hooks, and *Tonic Immobility* is often satisfyingly brawny fun. Business Casual, a sledgehammer satire railing at a "goose-stepping" "whiskey-dick" "mafia man", perfectly marries the sinister prowl of classic Jesus Lizard with Patton's theatrical venom, while Predators And Scavengers evokes the helter-skelter hurtle of late-period Black Flag. Patton's ever-present appreciation for the absurd lends an acerbic edge, leavening his group's wall-to-wall mêlée.

Stevie Chick

**Will Stratton**

★★★★★

The Changing Wilderness

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

**Acoustic state-of-the-world ruminations on singer/songwriter's seventh.**



Having over the past 13 years sought to locate a stylistic mid-point some-

where between Jackson Browne and Nick Drake, New York state's Will Stratton has developed a musical character pretty much all his own. There are also echoes of more modern kindred musical souls such as Steve Gunn and Fionn Regan, and if Stratton previously tended lyrically towards the introspective – understandably, when writing about overcoming cancer on 2014's *Gray Lodge Wisdom* – here he turns his gaze outwards. Sometimes directly, but more often elliptically, he takes on modern fascism in the coolly angry Black Hole and sketches immigrant families torn apart on the gently brooding Infer-tile Air. Meanwhile, Stratton's enduring love for *Bryter Layter* surfaces again amid the rippling acoustic guitar patterns of Fate's Ghost, on an album that sustains a beautiful atmosphere throughout.

Tom Doyle

**Damon Locks & Black Monument Ensemble**

★★★★★

NOW

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

**Inspirational Afro-futurist jazz, from a Chicago garden.**



It's quite a record that can simultaneously conjure the spirits of both Duke Ellington and Public Enemy, but this second album by the Chicago collective certainly pulls it off. Locks is a sound collagist and composer who combines widescreen jazz swing with a dense beats-and-samples fusillade recalling PE producers The Bomb Squad. Add in hypnotic vocal chants, new jazz stars Angel Bat Dawid (clarinet) and Ben LaMar Gay (cornet) in rapturous form, an imperative to emerge from the horrors of 2020 with fierce new purpose, and a garden full of cicadas to add the frisson of field recording, and *NOW* is a pretty intense 31 minutes. But while Locks and co's intent is radical, it's never forbidding. Instead, a punchy accessibility informs even their wildest excursions: an inspiring post-hip-hop, BLM era update of the Afro-futurist jazz of Phil Cohran and Horace Tapscott.

John Mulvey

**Leon Vynehall**

★★★★★

Rare, Forever

NINJA TUNE. CD/DL/LP

**Eclectic dancefloor experimentalist finds time for self-reflection.**



Much of Sussex-born producer and DJ Vynehall's music has focused on family. His mother's in-car mixtapes inspired his breakthrough EP, while his haunting 2018 debut album, *Nothing Is Still*, wove the story of his grandparents' emigration to 1960s USA. But our current collective narrative has allowed Vynehall to focus on himself. *Rare, Forever* has its feet on the dancefloor. Rich, dreamlike house grooves (Snakeskin ∞ Has-Been) threaten to combust but hold something back; doleful, beat-free walls of sound (An Exhale) are moving, before icy drone adds a sinister edge (Farewell! Magnus Gabbro). Evidence of Vynehall's polymathic musical approach – recent production gigs include working in drill and experimental pop – abounds in the loping skank meets jazzy minimalism of Alichea Vella Amor. In all, *Rare, Forever's* prevailing mood is sensuous and luxurious.

Stephen Worthy

**Microcorps**

★★★★

XMIT

ALTER. DL/LP

**Alexander Tucker's latest: digital tumult, disembodied voices, unsettling, alluring.**



The idea of electronic music artists giving life, conceptually and artistically, to a humanoid is nothing new, as a certain Mr Numan will attest. But the results rarely sound as nightmarish and overpowering as those forged by Microcorps' Alex Tucker. A veteran of over 20 years as a solo artist in his many incarnations, Tucker's MO here consists of skittish, hyperspeed beats and vocals smudged and twisted to the point of disfigurement. Voices have shape but rarely definition. The closest to a traditional take is Gazelle Twin's contribution on the disturbing, polyrhythmic lost horror movie theme of XEM. Stretched and unnaturally slowed, yes, but discernible. By contrast, Tucker's own voice flits between childlike and guttural roar on DOR, fed by a tempo akin to Burundi drummers at warp factor 10. The atmosphere may be oppressive, but the mood generated is seductive.

Stephen Worthy

**Paul Weller**

★★★★★

Fat Pop (Volume 1)

POLYDOR. CD/DL/LP

**Lockdown album emerges just 12 months after the Modfather's last. Ker-pow!**



Paul Weller's astonishing recent work-rate – four albums in as many years – would not seem quite so extraordinary were it not for the fact that the quality control has never once wobbled. *Fat Pop (Volume 1)*, conceived and written mid-Covid clampdown, suggests Weller's ability to write fizzing pop tunes, slinky soul anthems and weird dub-electronica hybridisations is inexhaustible. This 12-tracker doesn't feel as 'big' as 2020's funky *On Sunset*, nor as even as the woody *True Meanings*, but the array of styles means no one will walk away untouched. Opener Cosmic Fringes is the clipped, post-punk attack dog, complementing the title track's moody dub-funk; Shades Of Blue, True and Failed are conventional old-school nuggets; Testify is a swampy night tripper; and That Pleasure the grooving disco jewel. Plus much more. Roll on *Volume 2* in 2022...

Pat Gilbert



**Amy Speace**

★★★★★

There Used To Be Horses Here

PROPER. CD/DL/LP

Raw emotions hit the spot for Americana singer-songwriter.

An album about losing your father is never going to be a chucklefest but, as Nashville-based Amy Speace proves, neither does it have to be maudlin. After an ambivalent relationship, Speace and her emotionally distant father finally became close in his last years, and in his final weeks the memories poured out. Memories of being driven in a Pontiac convertible by his sister's boyfriend, of a cabin in the woods, of dreaming his twin was about die: all this runs through Speace's deeply personal songs, but in a code universal enough for everyone to relate to. When not reminiscing about dad, Speace delves into her own memories, often from the perspective of being a new mother – the circle of life never ending. Raw and heartbreaking in parts, yet always kind and gentle, this is an album of hope to get you through the hardest times.

Andy Fyfe

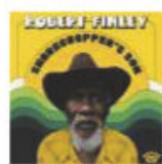
**Robert Finley**

★★★★★

Sharecropper's Son

EASY EYE SOUND. CD/DL/LP

Satisfying third from the 66-year-old bluesman from Winnsboro, Louisiana.



Producer Dan Auerbach keeps it pleasingly simple on the second album he has recorded with Robert Finley, foregrounding the bluesman's expressive vocal – from gruff tenor to soulful falsetto – over

10 songs, mainly autobiographical, including two ad-libbed live in the studio. With Finley is a top-notch band – guitarist Kenny Brown and bassist Eric Deaton who previously played with Junior Kimbrough and RL Burnside; Memphis Boys Bobby Wood and Gene Chrisman on keyboards and drums respectively – keeping the heat turned up high. Make Me Feel Alright is a joyous call and response; Souled Out On You a heart-breaker with deep feeling; Country Child, meanwhile, is pure Hill Country hypnotic boogie. "Always had old folks saying that boy ain't gonna be no good," Finley sings on that song. They couldn't have been more mistaken.

Lois Wilson

**Anthony Joseph**

★★★★★

The Rich Are Only Defeated When Running For Their Lives

HEAVENLY SWEETNESS. CD/DL/LP

Absorbing eighth album by poet, musician and author.



Here, Joseph explores what it means to be British Trinidadian, identifying his post-

Windrush generational voice through a celebration of the Caribbean diaspora, the unifying thread through much of his work. The album's legend is taken from the Trinidadian writer and social activist CLR James's 1938 book on the Haitian revolution, *The Black Jacobins*. Two of the key tracks, *Kamau and Language* (Poem For Anthony McNeill), pay homage to the Barbadian and Jamaican poets of their respective titles. The former is a praise song and syncopated jazz dance, centred around Shabaka Hutchings' spiralling bass clarinet (other band members include such noted jazzmen as Jason Yarde, who also produces and arranges, Colin Webster and Denys Baptiste). The latter, meanwhile, summons sacred spirits through its 10-minute-plus enlightenment groove.

Lois Wilson

**Various**

★★★★

PRSNT

MODERN OBSCURE MUSIC. DL/LP

Brisk compilation that questions how we engage with music.



Based on an academic study showing that a third of all digital listeners skip

to a new track within 30 seconds, Barcelona label Modern Obscure Music challenged 12 of the world's most experimental artists to create contained pieces no longer than 32 seconds. The carefully sequenced result is a fleeting joy. Ranging from the spoken word ambience of Visible Cloaks to the languid fretless bass and austere atmospherics of Nicolas Godin & Pierre Rousseau, only Ryuichi Sakamoto's decision to play the silent John Cage card disappoints. While the biggest surprises come in Frank Ocean collaborator Chassol's contained jazz-funk symphony and Lafawndah's slippery mix of brutalist beats and bad disco, Pascal Comelade shows vintage class, simulating a hospital's ECG. *PRSNT* may be shorter than *Sympathy For The Devil* or *Paranoid Android*, but it's packed with compelling thrills.

Andy Cowan

**William The Conqueror**

★★★★★

Maverick Thinker

CHRYSALIS. CD/DL/LP

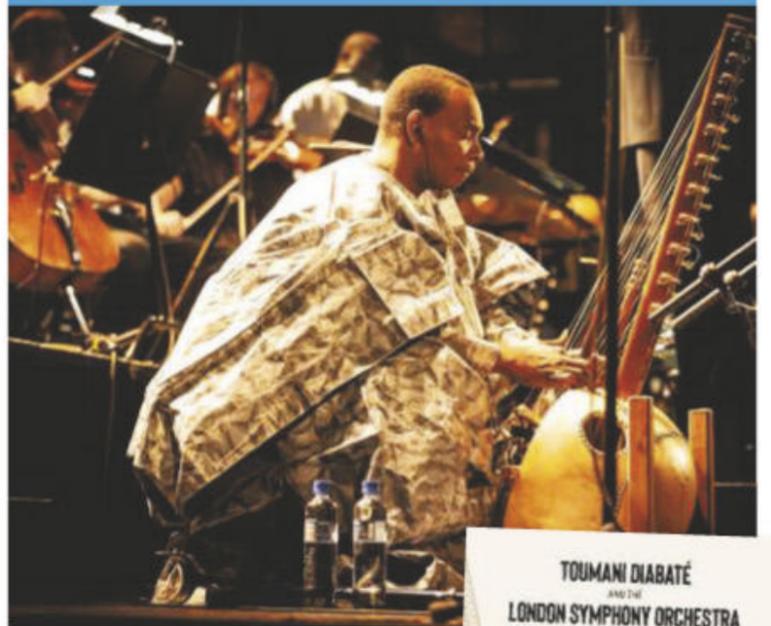
Final part of Ruarri Joseph's epic autobiographical triptych.



Three is clearly William The Conqueror's magic number. The third album in a

loose trilogy, *Maverick Thinker* is also the Cornish three-piece's third album in just over three years. While central Conqueror Ruarri Joseph awaits publication of his debut novel, *Maverick Thinker* brings us up to date on his life and times. Now distanced from the electrified Americana that encased 2018's *Proud Disturber Of The Peace*, the trio of Joseph, bassist Naomi Holmes and drummer Harry Harding have hit on a deeply grooved talking swamp-grunge blues. Scrutinising his suitability as an adult and glancing at mortality, Joseph's half-spoken lyrics glide across slinking rhythms and fuzzy, fizzing guitar, interspersed by the likes of Quiet Life's seabreeze piano melody. *Maverick Thinker* draws the listener into a very personal world and rewards them with enlightenment.

Andy Fyfe



**Toumani Diabaté And The London Symphony Orchestra**

★★★★★

Kôrôlên

WORLD CIRCUIT. CD/DL/LP

Malian superstar investigates his mystical side with added strings, on music "older than Bach".

A CLASH of two worlds, perhaps – the Malian kora master and a band of improvising griots meet 30 members of one of the finest western classical orchestras – but there is no doubting their empathy as the performers seek connections. The logistics must have been daunting: "Everyone has different dreams, so everybody plays the pieces differently," says Diabaté. The whole enterprise could have collapsed at any moment, so credit to conductor Clark Rundell, a veteran of jazz sessions, and arrangers Ian Gardiner (the classical musicians upfront and adapting to the West African mood swings) and Nico Muhly (giving the musicians space and adding cues for Diabaté to extemporise around). Recorded at London's Barbican in 2008, but timeless in every other aspect.



ALSO RELEASED

**Khalab & M'Berra Ensemble**

★★★★★

M'berra

REAL WORLD. CD/DL/LP



Afro-futurism recorded in the M'berra refugee camp in Mauritania, captured by Italian producer Khalab, using traditional instruments, electric guitars and electronics. It's an intense listen (start with *Reste À L'Ombre* and *Moulán Shakur*) with trance, deep house and hardcore electro, but the Africans – among them some fairly big names, including *Disco of Tartit* – hold their own against the onslaught.

**Crimi**

★★★★

Luci E Guai

AIRFONO. CD/DL/LP



Folk (Sicilian), funk (New Orleans) and raï (Algerian) combine to produce a perfectly punk blend in the hands of jazzers (French) who realised they can't simply (or convincingly) play the old way and rewrote the rules with impunity. There's a hint of Rachid Taha in their fearless pilfering, though leader Julien Lesuisse, who sings and plays sax, comes across as more refined.

**Altin Gün**

★★★★

Yol

GLITTERBEAT. CD/DL/LP



Third outing for a Netherlands-based band too often lazily lumped in with their Turkish psych heroes, when their fearless brand pure of pure pop is here far closer to The Human League than Barış Manço. *Yüce Dağ Başında* is a catchy single, but it fits perfectly among the percussion, synths and omnichords, suggesting the sextet have now found their niche.

**Antonis Antoniou**

★★★★

Kkisméttin

AJABU!. CD/DL/LP



Using as percussion the barricades that divide his hometown (Nicosia) between Greek and Turkish zones in Cyprus, Antoniou creates an edgy, *duende*-filled mélange of shadows and spectres, recorded as lockdown magnified the lack of freedoms with which he and his fellow citizens live. Lute, synths, concrete-filled barrels and ghosts make an unnerving sound, the future looking over its shoulder. *DH*



Lars Opstad

Robert Finley: proving everyone wrong.

# FILTER ALBUMS EXTRA

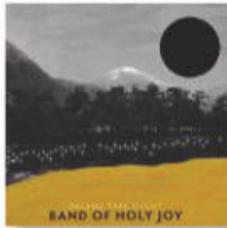


## Alfa Mist

★★★★

Bring Backs  
ANTI-. [CD/DL/LP](#)

A real sense of progression on this self-taught British jazz pianist's fourth LP, packed with skittering genre fusions (folk, rock, hip-hop), Rhodes and Johnny Woodham's trumpet. A melancholic air pervades Mist's untutored playing and soul-searching raps. *AC*



## Band Of Holy Joy

★★★★★

Dreams Take Flight  
TINY GLOBAL PRODUCTIONS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Having perfected their existential beat-soul, BOHJ's third wave uses its heady textures to cast a caustic gaze at modern life. Optimism ultimately wins out, trumpet-flushed standout That Magic Thing forcefully concluding: "Love is a healing force." *AC*



## Graham Costello & STRATA

★★★★★

Second Lives  
GEARBOX. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Costello corrals new blood on Glasgow's jazz scene into a dynamic set, building on his drum pulse and Fergus McCreadie's piano figures. Punchy brass and squalling guitars give a wild improvisational edge. *AC*



## Current Joys

★★★★

Voyager  
SECRETLY CANADIAN. [CD/DL/LP](#)

American Honey, Dancer In The Dark, Big Star: song titles suggest a plaid-shirted classicism that Nevada's Nick Rattigan more than makes good on with aerated guitars, melodies, orchestral crescendos and heartsore vocals. Satisfyingly brash. *JB*



## Howie Lee

★★★★★

Birdy Island  
MAIS UM. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Beijing producer and Snoop Lion remix continues his singular path with a heady collision of folk and modernity: woodwind and Buchla experiments meet ceremonial Taoist music, footwork and grime, peaking on closer The Door Of Aspiration. *AC*



## Night Beats

★★★★★

Outlaw R&B  
FUZZ CLUB. [CD/LP/MC](#)

Peripatetic Texan Danny Lee Blackwell's fourth LP of psych rock thrills was sun-baked in California. While not short on garage freakouts (Revolution; Crypt) there's added twang to Hell In Texas and a spaghetti western shimmer on New Day's unheavenly chorus. *JB*

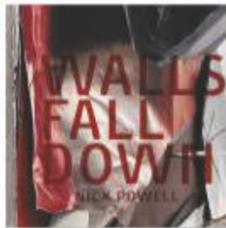


## No-No Boy

★★★★

1975  
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Vietnamese American Julian Saporiti explores the 1975 fall of Saigon via his family history. Twelve thoughtful indie-folk songs use sampled field recordings to trace a line from WWII internment camps to contemporary immigration centres and refugee camps. *JB*



## Nick Powell

★★★★

Walls Fall Down  
FURCAT. [DL](#)

Formerly of Strangelove, now a composer for theatre, film and TV, Powell's assured solo debut ranges from taut, post-punk dance (Feels Like Dancing) to tastefully melancholic pop (Elbow-ish Dust) that has all the moves but retains its composure. *CP*



## Esther Rose

★★★★★

How Many Times  
FULL TIME HOBBY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

New Orleans country classicist's third sounds very jolly for a break-up LP. Although unflinchingly honest, she looks for lessons to learn rather than bridges burned. Like her hero Hank Williams, Rose's songwriting revels in its directness. *AF*



## Roy

★★★★★

Roy's Garage  
IDÉE FIX. [DL/LP](#)

Patrick Lefler doesn't stint on smartly orchestrated psych. Whether it's the blissed-out baroque of As Long As You're Feeling or cartoonish self-analysis of Where Did My Mind Go?, his inward-looking pop has shades of The Beach Boys and 13th Floor Elevators. *AC*

## EXTENDED PLAY



**Bruce Springsteen:** upstaged by Obama's *Amazing Grace*.

## Renegades: Born In The USA

SPOTIFY PODCAST

THE POINT where music and politics intersect is where musicians will generally only want to talk about politics, and politicians about music. As such, *Grace: American Music*, the third episode of a conversational summit between former President Barack Obama and long-term statesman Bruce Springsteen, is initially dominated by Obama. The first album he bought was Stevie Wonder's *Talking Book*, *Court And Spark* changed his life, he's not wild about heavy metal but he did like

to play air guitar aboard Air Force One, through to music nights at the White House where he and Michelle helped conceive Bruce's Broadway show. Thereafter, we microdose Springsteen's autobiography, *Born To Run*: from learning to play honky tonk to Dylan, Woody Guthrie and the path to transcendence via life-changing stage shows ("it's not really a joke, that is my purpose at night"). It's not until Obama recounts the eulogy for Rev. Clementa Pinckney in South Carolina, where he sang *Amazing Grace* from the pulpit, that Bruce is finally – willingly – upstaged. *JB*



## Teke: Teke

★★★★

Shirushi  
KILL ROCK STARS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

From a tribute act to Japanese surf guitarist Takeshi 'Terry' Terauchi grew this Montreal septet. Their musical round-trip takes in Brazilian psych, Bulgarian folk, celestial chimes and flute-playing lavish enough for fans of Amon Düül II's headshop tribal rituals. *JB*



## White Flowers

★★★★★

Day By Day  
TOUGH LOVE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

The Preston duo weave a warp of Ghost Box's spooky synths and artistic *Gestalt* with a weft of Kevin Shields' heavily felted drone and fade. Meanwhile, both the production and Katie Drew's vocals have a Cocteau-ish, spindle-pricked magic about them. *JB*

# THE SPECIALS

UK TOUR 2021

## AUGUST

**31 / BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY \*NEW SHOW\***

## SEPTEMBER

- 02 / PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
- 03 / BOURNEMOUTH WINDSOR HALL
- 04 / BRIGHTON CENTRE
- 06 / GLASGOW BARROWLAND **SOLD OUT**
- 07 / EDINBURGH USHER HALL
- 09 / MANCHESTER O2 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE
- 10 / CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
- 11 / COVENTRY RICOH ARENA
- 13 / HULL BONUS ARENA
- 14 / BLACKPOOL EMPRESS BALLROOM
- 16 / BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
- 17 / NOTTINGHAM MOTORPOINT ARENA
- 18 / DONCASTER THE DOME
- 20 / NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL

**21 / READING RIVERMEAD \*NEW SHOW\***

- 23 / LONDON ROUNDHOUSE **SOLD OUT**
- 24 / LONDON ROUNDHOUSE **SOLD OUT**

A DHP & CROSSTOWN PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH X-RAY



# RICHARD THOMPSON

OCTOBER 2021

- 25 YORK BARBICAN
- 26 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
- 27 PERTH CONCERT HALL
- 28 GATESHEAD SAGE
- 30 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
- 31 MANCHESTER OPERA HOUSE

NOVEMBER 2021

- 01 CARDIFF ST DAVIDS HALL
- 02 THE LONDON PALLADIUM
- 03 DUBLIN VICAR STREET

A DHP & FRIENDS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY



NEW BOOK: **BEE SWING** OUT NOW

# BECOME AN EMPIRE VIP SUBSCRIBER

YOU PAY JUST £79 A YEAR\* (WORTH £132.26)



## VIP PERKS INCLUDE:

SAVE OVER **£50**



**13 ISSUES OF EMPIRE MAGAZINE**

Delivered directly to your door, with bespoke covers



**THE EMPIRE SPOILER SPECIAL PODCAST**

Filmmakers and Team Empire dig into the new releases. PLUS 100+ episode archive



**12-MONTH PICTUREHOUSE MEMBERSHIP**

2 free tickets, 20% off food and drink and more

PLUS **EXCLUSIVE VIP CLUB EVENTS**

FIND OUT MORE AT: [EMPIREONLINE.COM/VIP](http://EMPIREONLINE.COM/VIP)

\*When you pay by recurring payment. We can currently offer Empire VIP to UK customers only.

All types of memorabilia including vintage posters, t-shirts and clothing, promo shop displays, handbills, tickets, tour laminates and much more!!!



The Music Memorabilia Specialist  
[www.whoswax.co.uk](http://www.whoswax.co.uk)

To Advertise in

# MOJO

Classified

Please call Max Garwood on **01733 366405**

MAX GARWOOD 01733 366405

# Phasers to stun

A spacerock masterpiece is readied for relaunch. **John Mulvey** celebrates the return of the original Major Lazer.

## Spiritualized



### Lazer Guided Melodies

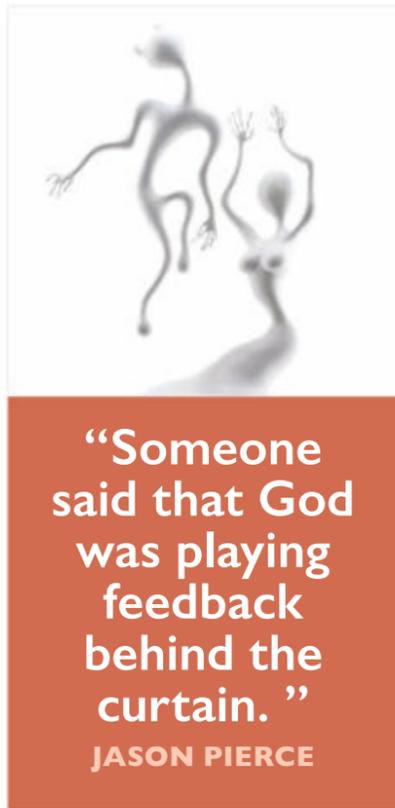
FAT POSSUM. LP

GGY POP'S *Lust For Life*. Chuck Berry's *San Francisco Dues*. The Soul Album by Otis Redding. *Soul Dressing* by Booker T. & The M.G.'s. And, less edifyingly, *Lie: The Love And Terror Cult*, the album released while Charles Manson was awaiting trial for the Tate-LaBianca murders. These were the five records the members of Spiritualized used to obscure their faces at an NME photo shoot in July 1992. Their desire to be seen as historic, soulful, transgressive, at an elevated remove from their British contemporaries, was almost touchingly needy. "The whole of what people tag 'indie' is the biggest mainstream going, and nobody seems to want to work outside of that," the band's leader, Jason Pierce, told me in the accompanying cover story. "It's not hard to produce something tonally avant-garde. But people are scared to explore themselves and the music they can create."

Pierce, in contrast, was fearless, vitalised by the diverse, nourishing sounds he loved. Four months earlier, Spiritualized had released their debut album, *Lazer Guided Melodies*, a double where the 12 pieces were arranged into four "movements" (original pressings of the CD enforced the concept by programming them into four tracks; no skipping allowed). The music was audacious, but not forbidding: Stooges primitivism rearranged by Brian Wilson; gospel supplications ringing out amidst the ambient drones of LaMonte Young's *Dream House*; minimalist strategies played out with maximalist flourishes. In a Rugby studio normally used for advertising jingles, Pierce and his band-mates engineered a porthole to the cosmos.

When work began on *Lazer Guided Melodies* in late 1990, however, Spiritualized's ascent was far from guaranteed. Pierce had done half of the creative heavy lifting in Spacemen 3, but shyly, discreetly. Peter 'Sonic Boom' Kember, another obsessive music head born on the same day as Pierce in November 1965, had been the band's chief spokesman, a polemicist for mind-altering experiences with a draconian focus on minimalism. By the time the final Spacemen 3 album, *Recurring*, was released in February 1991, Pierce and the other members of Spacemen 3 had wearied of Kember's unflinchingly reductive vision, and already branched out into Spiritualized.

At first, their new project moved tentatively: a debut single saw the band applying a modish, baggy lope to The Troggs' *Anyway That You Want Me*. But the real Spiritualized sound had actually been prototyped on *Hypnotized*, a 1989 Spacemen 3 single, where the band's zoned-out extrapolations of psychedelia had been augmented with layers of horns, feedback



"Someone said that God was playing feedback behind the curtain."  
JASON PIERCE

and chimes, imbuing the slight melody with a vast, ethereal shimmer. It was a template expanded upon further for *Lazer Guided Melodies*. "This was not music of great complexity in terms of chords and key changes," wrote bassist Will Carruthers in his memoir, *Playing The Bass With Three Left Hands*. "The beauty of the creation lay in what was wound around the simple structures."

In Rugby's VHF Studios, near the flat Pierce shared with keyboardist Kate Radley, the band worked innovatively and collaboratively. The melody of *Step Into The Breeze* might have had similarities with an old Spacemen 3 song like *So Hot*, but its orchestrated heft and phased disorientations were a strikingly richer experience. At the time, Pierce was evasive about the process. "A lot of the sounds we create aren't being played," he told me. "I can hear vocal harmonies and string sections on there that were never recorded. Someone said that God was playing feedback behind the curtain." Today, he is more forthcoming. "VHF Studios possessed a home electronics phaser/sampler unit that I believe was built from a mail order kit," he says. "The quality of the sampling wasn't great, but the phase setting was

incredible. I've yet to find anything since that runs as deep and as slow as this thing did. It's all over the first two albums."

The sessions were cheap, too – Pierce estimates *Lazer Guided Melodies* was recorded for £3,000 – but, like so many of his subsequent records, its languid, lavish atmosphere took a good while longer to finesse. Pierce decamped to Battery Studios in London for mixing and to "explore a more professional way of making music", emerging with an album whose filigreed sophistication and classic resonances were mostly a world away from the indie rock he so disdained. The building blocks were modest, but the scale was monumental. In just over seven minutes, *Shine A Light* blew up a whispered gospel invocation into a glimmering sprawl akin to Pink Floyd's *Echoes*, then ramped up the intensity with saxophone firestorms and a scree of guitar noise worthy of Sonny Sharrock. Like the MC5 before them, Spiritualized had worked out how garage rock and spiritual jazz, twin incendiaries, could come together.

In the midst of all this, the lyrics sometimes felt like an afterthought, even clunky: "Gonna take control, I'm gonna free my will/I'm gonna swallow it whole like some giant new pill," ran *I Want You*, the album's surging, relatively orthodox indie hit. And while Pierce's crafty elision of love, religion and drug rhetoric was most extravagantly realised on 1997's *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space*, he was already betraying a taste for wordplay that could verge on the cornball. "I'm losing all my thoughts in 200 bars," he sang on the final track, conflating chemical with musical obliteration, as Radley counted off the song's bars from one to 200.

Run, though, embedded Pierce's finest conceit in its DNA, taking direct inspiration from both JJ Cale's *Call Me The Breeze* and the John Cale-era Velvet Underground's *Run Run Run*. If much of *Lazer Guided Melodies* heard secret harmonies in disparate musics – that reverberant sweet spot between *Fun House* and *Pet Sounds* – Run pinpointed the common heartbeat, too. Drone rock ramalam, blues-adjacent choogle, what Neu! called the "*Endlese Gerade*" (endless line) of motorik; they all fed into its streamlined pulse. It drove *Lazer Guided Melodies* out from a shared repository of great records, and towards Spiritualized's future – one that, soon enough, would be every bit as transcendental.



#### BACK STORY: PURER PHASE

● Few late 20th century bands are more suited to a meticulous overhaul of their back catalogue than Spiritualized: the neurotic attention to sonic details, elaborate packaging, cratedigger reference points and often sketchy nature of '90s vinyl making them prime candidates for the full treatment. Hence *Lazer Guided Melodies* will be followed shortly by reissues of *Pure Phase* (1995), *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space* (1997) and *Let It Come Down* (2001) as 180g double albums, mastered from half-speed lacquer cuts and in gatefold sleeves. White vinyl, too, as a further limited edition.

Just a phase:  
Jason Pierce  
in spiritual  
orbit, 1992.





Philly fellas: Harold Melvin & The Blues Notes with Teddy Pendergrass (far left) suited, not yet booted.

# Tickets please

Fifty years ago, Gamble & Huff's masterplan came to fruition. By **Geoff Brown**.

## Various

★★★★★

Get On Board The Soul Train: The Sound Of Philadelphia International Records Volume 1

UNITED SOULS. 8-CD+12-INCH/DL

MARKING THE 50th anniversary of Kenneth Gamble and Leon Huff's Philadelphia International Records, these eight albums from 1971-73, their earliest years, remastered from original tapes, shine a light on forgotten corners of the influential '70s label's past.

Gamble & Huff had been trying to get a new label off the ground for some years. In fact, the epitome of an early Philly soul group, The Intruders had been recording US R&B hits on the Gamble label since 1966 – Cowboys To Girls was a Number 1 in '68 – so it's no surprise that *Save The Children* is full of highs, from the Gil Scott-Heron title track to UK hit I'll Always Love My Mama.

The two best-known albums from those first years – The O'Jays' *Back Stabbers* and Harold Melvin & The Blues Notes' *I Miss You* – have lasted thanks to memorable lead vocals and classic songs. On the former, Love Train, 992 Arguments, Sunshine, the title track (which also comes as a bonus 12-inch)



and more; on the latter, former drummer Teddy Pendergrass's storming takeover of the quintet as heard on long takes of Yesterday I Had The Blues, Be For Real and the title track, while US R&B Number 1 If You Don't Know Me By Now benefits from its relative brevity.

*Volume 1* also boasts three albums by Paul Williams, AKA jazz singer Billy Paul – *Ebony Woman* (first out on Neptune in 1970, it features a bonkers Everyday People), the underrated *Going East* (the first-ever PIR release), and *360 Degrees Of...* (the one with Me And Mrs Jones) which was boosted by trademark Gamble & Huff social comment in Am I Black Enough For You?, the pride of Brown Baby, and I'm Just A Prisoner's drama and quiet anger at injustice.

The instrumental force behind these exceptional voices, MFSB, was the label's very own Funk Brothers and M.G.'s. 1973 debut *MFSB* featured zippily orchestrated covers of Superfly track Freddie's Dead, Sly Stone's Family Affair, and Philly staples like Back Stabbers, housed in an arresting sleeve – huge needle in a plush coffin, surrounded by poppies, in a graveyard.

But the biggest surprise here will be *Dick Jensen*. A Hawaiian soul brother of some dynamism, think James Brown, Joe Tex and Jackie Wilson, his only PIR album, last reissued in 2013, is a brave mix of big Philly arrangements, his ballad-favouring voice strong on New York City's A Lonely Town and uptempo I Don't Want To Cry. He sounds like the producers' dry run for Lou Rawls' hits to come.

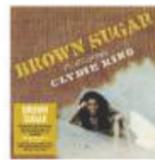
## Brown Sugar Featuring Clydie King

★★★★★

Brown Sugar Featuring Clydie King

DEMON. LP

1973 album by the soulful backup voice for the Stones, Humble Pie, Dylan etc.



Brown Sugar – not the lovers rock trio – was a solo vehicle for Clydie King in all but name

which produced just one long-player on the Chelsea Records label in 1973. It turned out to be a very busy year for the Dallas-born singer, who as a member of the go-to trio of session singers The Blackberries was working with Humble Pie and Pink Floyd and had just finished a still-unissued project for Motown. Indeed, Motown should have been the perfect fit for King; her sweet, raspy Diana Ross-like vocal on this album is a pure delight, captured best on the exquisite Loneliness and Didn't I, two of the three singles the record yielded. The third, a cover of Dance To The Music, revealed a tougher, more gospel-rooted edge to her craft.

Lois Wilson

## Kaleidoscope & Fairfield Parlour

★★★★★

Sky Children: The Best Of...

BEYOND BEFORE. CD+DVD

CD/DVD set collects greatest misses and previously unseen live performances.



Not to be confused with the American band of the same name, this Kaleidoscope

were formed in London and made two albums on Fontana – 1967's *Tangerine Dream* and 1969's *Faintly Blowing* – both textbook pieces of Brit psych, indebted to Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd but more pop. In 1970, they rebranded as the short-lived Fairfield Parlour, and on that year's *From Home To Home* for Vertigo embraced a more folky, progressive sound. Both bands' wares are best consumed whole, but this 17-track cherry-pick nevertheless provides a tantalising taste of what they were capable of: Kaleidoscope tracks such as Flight From Ashiya, A Dream For Julie and Sky Children are all enchanting fancies, while previously unissued archive footage of the Parlour's 1970 Beat Club performance proves they could cut it live too.

Lois Wilson

## Gary Moore

★★★★

How Blue Can You Get

PROVOGUE. CD/DL/LP

Previously unreleased tracks from the Moore family's personal archive.



Fusion, rock, jazz and, of course, the blues – Belfast's great guitar virtuoso could do it all, but it was his quicksilver songwriting-relationship with Thin Lizzy's Phil Lynott that shone the brightest. Largely paying jaw-dropping homage to blues luminaries such as Freddie King, Memphis Slim, and Elmore James (yes, Moore could play slide, too), this fiery eight-song selection suggests there isn't *that* much left in the vaults, but the title track cover of B.B. King's 1964 hit – "Took you for a \$100 dinner/ You said 'Thanks for the snack'" – is essayed with extraordinary feel and great affection. However, Moore's originals here are more uneven, so while Looking At Your Picture surprises with its speedy drum and bass breakbeat, In My Dreams feels overly indebted to the 1979 Lynott/Moore UK Number 8 hit Parisienne Walkways. Moore's guitar-work is stellar throughout, though; dazzling in its ferocity.

James McNair

## Francisco Mora Catlett

★★★★★

Mora! I and II

FAR OUT. CD/DL/LP

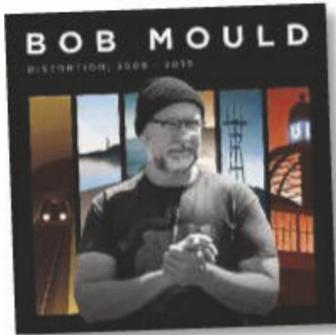
Deep Afro-Latin jazz project by longstanding Arkestra percussionist.



After working as a session percussionist for Capitol Records in Mexico City, Francisco Mora played with Sun Ra from 1973-80, conceiving *Mora!* in Detroit as an exploration of the black presence in the Americas. With double-bassist Rodney Whitaker of the Roy Hargrove Quintet, Strata Records founder Kenny Cox on piano, saxophonist Vincent Bowens and Emile Borde of the Tripoli Steel Band, 1987's private press *Mora!* draws on African-Caribbean, Latin and Native American motifs, as heard on Afra Jum, which interprets Haitian melodies; Samba De Amor diverts to Brazil; and Cultural Warrior allows Bowens, Whitaker, and Cox to take charge. For the sequel, recorded soon after but shelved for decades, Mora added former Mingus trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, allowing greater melodic scope. Old Man Joe swings from blues to reggae and Amazona is a complex scat jam. This deep jazz dive has conjured profound results.

David Katz

Courtesy Sony



**Bob Mould**

★★★★★

Distortion: 2008-2019  
DEMON. LP

**Final volume of vinyl reissue programme for Mould's post-Hüsker Dü output.**

Following an unexpected mid-career turn towards electronica, the releases collected here saw Mould return to the caustic songcraft that was his previous trademark. But this would be no simple retreat to the comfort of familiar sounds – albums like 2008's *District Line* and 2012's *Silver Age* found Mould's belief in the cathartic power of electric guitar revived. He rediscovered a voice driven by fury but tempered by wisdom – "Never too old to contain my rage," he barked on autobiographical *Silver Age*, while *Nemeses Are Laughing*, off 2014's smouldering *Beauty & Ruin*, was vengeance served cold and delicious. But maturity had won Mould a fragile peace with his demons, and 2019's excellent, unabashedly poppy *Sunshine Rock* – its sleeve and sound an unapologetic tribute to the Beach Boys 45s that raised him – offered a nostalgia balanced equally between bitter and sweet.

Stevie Chick



**Telex**

★★★★★

This Is Telex

MUTE. CD/DL/LP

**Timely reappraisal of offbeat Belgian synthpop pioneers.**



From the *Manneken Pis* to René Magritte, eccentricity and surrealism has long been celebrated in Belgium. The Telex story, told on this 14-track compilation, is a neat adjunct. In the late 1970s, the Moog-toting trio landed with synthpop takes on rock'n'roll standards and yé-yé, culminating in the single *Moskow Diskow*. A potent mix of Kraftwerkian sang-froid and Gainsbourg rakishness, with lyrics that deliberately sent up disco's French language obsession, it was a Europe-wide hit. In 1980 they even 'claimed' second-last place at Eurovision with a jaunty track named after the competition. Today, while the synth boogie woogie of *Twist À Saint Tropez* has a whiff of John Shuttleworth-like *fromage*, there's evidence here that the inclusive, disposable nature of Telex's work helped open up a new

Helen Appentley

front for electronic music, far from Stockhausen and Carlos, and firmly placed it in the mainstream.

Stephen Worthy



**Morgen**

★★★★★

Morgen

NOW-AGAIN RESERVE. LP

**Rare 1969 psych mind-blower with unreleased songs and alternate takes.**



To say Morgen's sole album had a difficult birth is an understatement – an unprovoked street attack put singer Steve Morgen out of action a year before its release, when his original band was kaput. It's easy to hear why its wide-eyed fudge of fuzzy garage and brooding hard rock has gained cult status among collectors – the acid-fried three-chord rush of *Welcome To The Void*, stop-start desperation blues of *Beggin' Your Pardon* and classic pop flirtation of *She's The Nitetime* splicing Murray Shiffrin's fiery Hendrix-like leads with bassist Bobby Rizzo and drummer Mike Ratti's relentless thrust. Abundant extras accentuate the Marmite quality of Morgen's OTT vocals and sexually voracious lyrics – a sticking point for some – but this undeniably druggy, speaker-shredding psychedelia deserves to reach the audience it missed.

Andy Cowan



**Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel**

★★★★★

The Best Years Of Our Lives

CHRYSALIS. LP

**Extended, coloured vinyl, 45th anniversary version.**



1974's *The Psychomodo* seemed to have set up Cockney Rebel as a major force, until the band upped and left leader Steve Harley. He recruited a new band, put his name in front of them and wrote a new song, *Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)*, about the desertion. Still an inspiring slice of vitriol, his only Number 1 proved to be Harley's pension plan, but its attendant album was more than the hit plus filler. *Mr Raffles (Man It Was Mean)* remains his most beautiful song; the title track was heroically self-indulgent ("If there's no room for laughter, there's no room for me"), while he was even slinky on *49th Parallel*. This 2-LP version, on blue and orange vinyl to reflect a line in *The Mad, Mad Moonlight*, adds a selection of extra tracks, although nothing here is previously unreleased.

John Aizlewood

# Swine fever

Autodidact post-punk's potent debut. By Andrew Male.

## The Nightingales

★★★★★

### Pigs On Purpose

CALL OF THE VOID. CD/DL/LP

ONE OF THE many fascinating aspects of King Rocker, Michael Cumming and Stewart Lee's delightful 2021 profile of Nightingales frontman Robert Lloyd, was its refusal to shoehorn his band into any scene or sub-culture and instead to see this group of post-punk, post-pub, post-industrial prolix ranters as having few acolytes and little cultural sway; an island of brilliance in a sea of average. The weird thing is, that's not how I remember it.

My cool school friend Simon bought *Pigs On Purpose* on release in 1982 after a rave review by Dave McCullough in *Sounds* magazine. We knew nothing about *The Prefects* – the derisive Birmingham punks fronted by Lloyd pre-Nightingales – but we liked this sound. As bookish contrarians we looked down our noses at heavy metal. But from the opening track, the aggrieved and verbose *Blood For Dirt*, with its piercing guitars and a demand for cheaper bus fares, this felt like our metal.

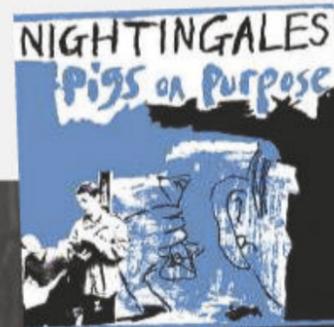
Importantly, it was funny. Not at the band's expense but knowingly arch. Here were songs concerned with the prosaic vernacular minutiae of egg boxes, shared flats, petty cash, pints of bitter and out-of-date bread; droll British kitchen-sink playlets

delivered in a weary, mordant bellow; the majestic summoning call of the barroom autodidact.

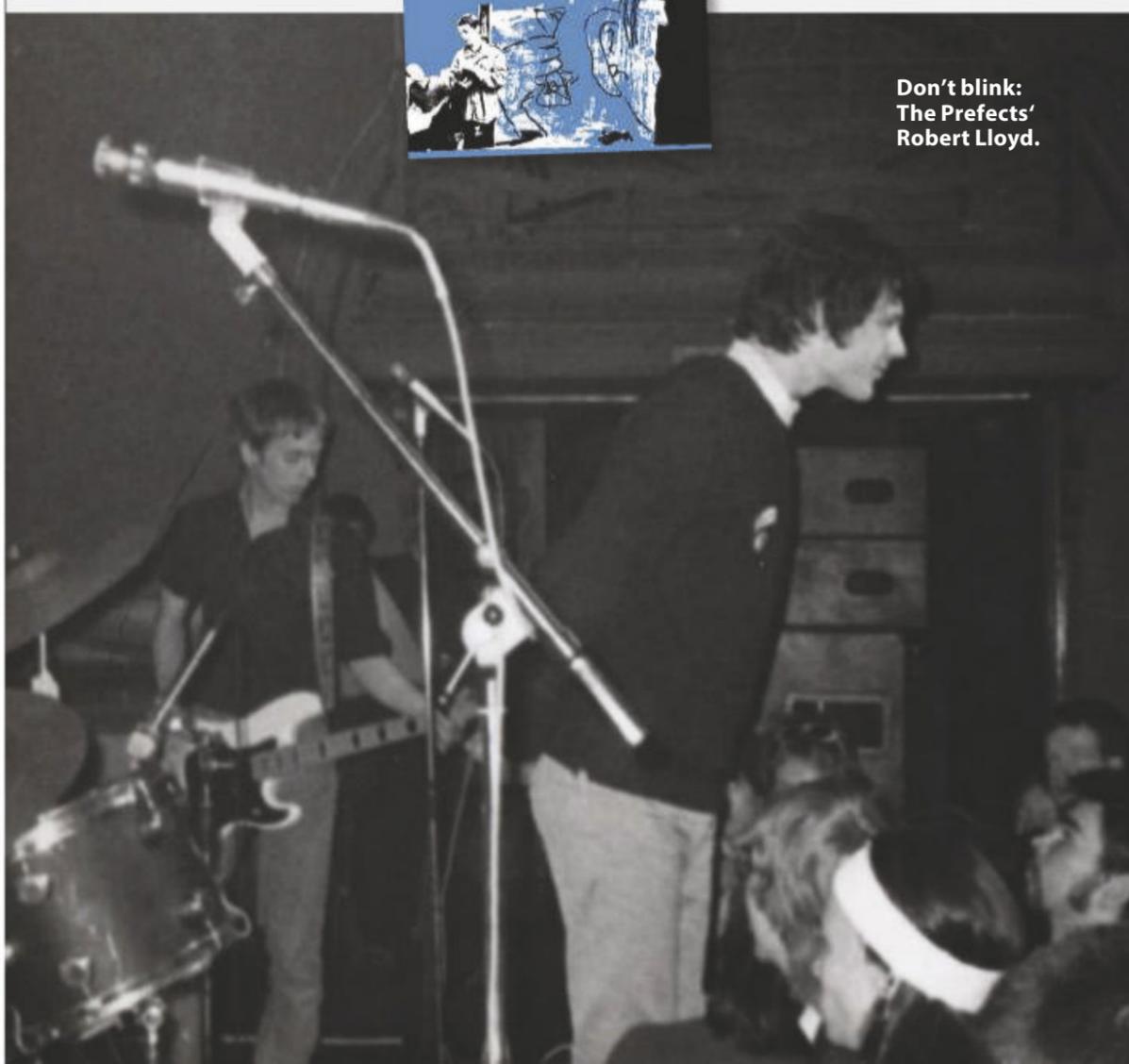
Also significant was the sound; angular, driving and ugly, just the music to irritate your peers. Thanks to older brothers, we already knew about Beefheart, but this sounded like the Captain stripped of the blues and all surreal desert poetry, played with cheap urgency on mail order guitars and cardboard drums; Corporal Fray Bentos and his *Desperate Quartet*.

Everything sounds much beefier here, but no less tasty. You also get an extra disc of singles and demos from around the same time (including *The Prefects' scabrous Bristol Road Leads To Dachau*) and some Eeyore-esque liner notes from Rob Lloyd which suggest that *Pigs On Purpose* failed to have much influence. Nonsense. As catalogued in John Robb's 2009 book, *Death To Trad Rock!*, by 1985 there was a healthy DIY post-punk scene which saw bands such as *A Witness*, *Pigbros*, *Big Flame* and *Bogshed*, drawing less from the chilly, art-punk sounds of *PiL*, *Wire* or *Magazine* and directly from the verbose, working-class cheap-vox aggro of *The Nightingales*. In fact, it's a sound whose non-conformist path can be traced up to the present day, not just in the current Nightingales but in bands such as *Idles*, *Fontaines D.C.*, *Black Country*, *New Road*, and *Squid*, tapping into something vital, alive and true. Maybe Lee and Lloyd

resist this version of history, happier to be recognised as unrecognised, a singular voice. Which Lloyd is, but he's also an influential one.



Don't blink: *The Prefects' Robert Lloyd*.





**FILE UNDER...**

Ultimate mixer: John and Yoko warm up with some rough rock'n'roll jams.

# Bringing in the pain

When therapy revealed some crucial truths to John Lennon, he decided we should all share them. By Jim Irvin.

**F**OR HIS 1970 solo debut, *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* (Capitol/UMC) ★★★★★ – now pimped-up in 50th anniversary splendour, remixed and massively expanded – John Lennon offered up a short, sharp shocker, a howl of anguish at his love-starved upbringing and the expectations heaped upon his shoulders as the '60s closed for business. Reaping the benefits of primal scream therapy, he carried the sessions into his songs, covering big topics in 10 succinct outbursts: God, love, class, justice, self-awareness, the loneliness of celebrity and the misery of parental abandonment. Bosh!

The bludgeoning, distorted Well Well Well, the swearing in Working Class Hero (“fucking”) and I Found Out (“cock”), the grief expressed in Mother and My Mummy’s Dead, the rubbishing of all belief systems in God, including a curt dismissal of his much mourned band (“I don’t believe in Beatles... The dream is over, yesterday”), served to test Lennon’s audience. They certainly didn’t consume this record with the enthusiasm they’d show the following year for *Imagine*. Yet it was the most quintessential record he’d make, using a spare, trio format to focus one’s attention on the unambiguous songs, drawing you in with their candour and then punching you in the face for getting too close, distilling everything Lennon had ever learned about

the impact of rock music, its beauty and its ugliness, sounding both elemental and ahead of the curve.

Phil Spector’s production was brilliant, an object lesson in small band recording, every element earning its keep, beautifully emphasised by Paul Hicks’ clearer, punchier new Ultimate Mix. John’s voice sounds sensational throughout, shredding on Well Well Well, wistful on Love and Look At Me, acidic on Working Class Hero. This is the work that suggests Lennon inhabits the penthouse above the list of all-time great rock voices. He even does a quick impression of the Cookie Monster. Ringo Starr and Klaus Voormann sound amazing together, too.

The reissue lands in multiple formats, including a super-deluxe version containing six hours of music across 6-CDs and two Blu-rays that bump it up to 11 hours, with extra outtakes, jams and the sessions for Yoko’s companion album.

The complete menu is: Ultimate Mix of the whole album – also on the vinyl editions – with Give Peace A Chance, Cold Turkey and Instant Karma added. (The album’s original 1970 mix isn’t included.) Alternative versions and outtakes: Elements Mixes focuses on aspects of the songs, an

a cappella Mother, a totally dry Working Class Hero, that sort of thing; one disc of “home” demos and two of Raw Studio Mixes without effects or reverb. (Intriguingly, this has Take 91 of Mother!); a disc following the evolution of each song in mini documentaries. Particularly striking is the development of God, from a piss-take at home through its broadening in the studio, Lennon still working out the lyrics and the best key, while Ringo rehearses his between-line fills. Then, after John decides he dislikes the direction it’s headed, he drafts in Billy Preston to add gospel piano, which he plays rather like Lincoln Mayorga on Ketty Lester’s Love Letters.

Twenty rough rock’n’roll jams and studio warm-ups, including snatches of Mystery Train, Get Back and early try-outs of I Don’t Wanna Be A Soldier from *Imagine* are fun to hear. Finally, there’s everything the same line-up recorded for *Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band*. An opportunity has been missed to bring together both the Plastic Ono Band albums in one matching package.

Perhaps another time. It’s all too much, perhaps, but Lennon’s debut remains thrilling, challenging, direct and

heartfelt. It’s only one of the abiding tragedies of his short life that he never bettered it.



**“The most quintessential record he’d make.”**

## Juju

★★★★★

Live At 131  
Prince Street

STRUT. CD/LP

**Plunky Branch and co live at Ornette Coleman's New York gallery, 1973.**



Legendary jazz-funk collective One-ness Of Juju began as the avant-garde outfit Juju in San Francisco in 1971, drawing on free jazz, Latin rhythms, and spiritual experimentation. After recording debut LP *A Message From Mozambique*, they decamped to New York to immerse themselves in the Greenwich Village jazz community, surviving on 25 cent pizza lunches and two-buck curry dinners. Ornette Coleman heard them at Lincoln Centre and invited them to occupy his SoHo gallery, where this intimate live LP was recorded before small audiences over a few days. The players maintain tight musical integration while allowing room for improvised expression. *Mozambique* is an Afro-Latin percussive jam that gives way to a plaintive vibraphone interlude and founder Plunky Branch's unfettered sax; Juju's Door reaches for the cosmos, and there are individual readings of Pharoah Sanders' Thembi and Eddie Palmieri's Azucar Pa' Ti.

David Katz



## Keith Jarrett

★★★★★

Sun Bear Concerts

ECM. LP

**Jazz pianist's landmark box set revived.**



Putting out an album containing six-and-a-half hours of improvised solo piano music at a time when the phonographic industry was facing a recession seemed like an insane extravagance in 1978 when ECM released *Sun Bear Concerts*, a 10-LP box set of five complete Keith Jarrett concerts recorded in Japan. But unlike most record companies, ECM valued artistic accomplishment over profit margins, and their unwavering commitment to Jarrett enabled one of his greatest triumphs. Over 40 years on, the performances are still spellbinding. Jarrett's lengthy but always engagingly melodic extemporisations range from gentle nostalgic reveries to impassioned rhapsodies and uplifting hymnals, all delivered in the limpid, lyrical style that became his trademark. Given its size, *Sun Bear Concerts* understandably never reached the 4 million sales of Jarrett's iconic 1975 live album *The Köln Concert*, but it nevertheless represents the absolute pinnacle of his famed solo recitals.

Charles Waring

## Peggy Lee

★★★★

Something Wonderful:  
Peggy Lee Sings The  
Great American  
Songbook

OMNIVORE. CD/DL

**Jazz singer's early 1950s radio recordings**



Never one for embroidering a melody with athletic twists and turns, Peggy Lee made simplicity a virtue with her conversational singing style and laconic approach to musical storytelling. Though she was a prolific songwriter with over 200 copyrights to her name, this new 2-CD retrospective reveals that the North Dakota singer was also an astute interpreter of songs from the Great American Songbook. Compiled from early-'50s radio broadcasts, the compilation mostly focuses on the immortal compositions of Johnny Mercer (*That Old Black Magic*), Rodgers & Hart (*Lover*), Hoagy Carmichael (*Georgia On My Mind*) and Frank Loesser (*Baby, It's Cold Outside*), but the inclusion of a few of the chanteuse's own tunes (including the delightful US chart-toppers *It's A Good Day and Mañana*) show that she was an accomplished composer whose work deserved a place in the Great American Songbook.

Charles Waring



## KMRU

★★★★★

Logue

INJAZERO. DL/LP

**Catch-all comp of Nairobi-based sound artist's elusive self-releases circa 2017-19.**



Joseph Kamaru's decision to start interweaving his phone's field recordings into his house and techno DJ sets was the beginning of an ongoing voyage of discovery. The grandson of Kenya's late king of Kikuyu Benga was soon creating meditative yet never-static compositions, free of overly dramatic gestures, but rich in intimate detail. There's a healing, sedate quality to Jinja Encounters' descending harp refrain, *A Meditation Of Listening's* chirping high frequencies and, less typically, Argon's dramatic wash of sci-fi synths and bleeped refrains that feels like a salve for frayed times. As with *Stars Of The Lid*, Tim Hecker or William Basinski, KMRU's spacious drones and long loops allow for slow evocation, yet his thrifty use of found sounds establishes the point of difference – granting his unimposing music a vivid narrative otherness.

Andy Cowan

**Beans means biz: The Who (from left) Keith Moon, Pete Townshend, John Entwistle and Roger Daltrey.**

## FILTER REISSUES



# Spirit of radio

Five CDs with 108 tracks, two 7-inch singles, a lavish booklet and memorabilia: the ultimate Who box set. By Jon Savage.

## The Who

★★★★★

The Who Sell Out:  
Super Deluxe Edition

UMC/POLYDOR. CD+LP/DL

IN 1967, THE WHO were being pulled in several different directions at once: away from the hit single treadmill, away from smart Mod pop into psychedelia and heavy rock, away from the UK hit parade into the laborious process of breaking America. Released at the end of that year, *The Who Sell Out* was a brilliant album that both contained and developed all these contradictory impulses within a concept that caught the post *Sgt. Pepper* mood and, with its pirate radio theme, plugged into the social history of the time.

This new Super Deluxe box doubles the 2009 reissue: a total immersion into the world of The Who in 1967 and 1968. The story of the album begins, as Townshend tells it, with him being summoned to Chris Stamp's "really quite unpleasant" Soho office in late summer and being told that the label needed a Who album by Christmas. What existed was a 'ragbag' of singles, songs written by all four of the group, and tracks like *Relax* and

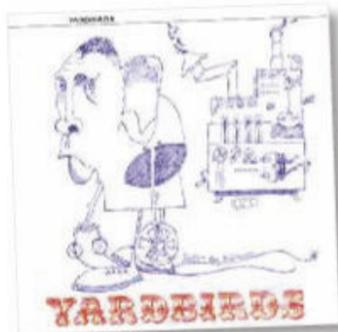
*Armenia City In The Sky* that caught the psychedelic lightning.

After a mooted collection called 'Who's Lily' was rejected, Townshend needed to come up with an idea. The pivotal song was *Odorono* – recorded in October – that revealed the path forward: an album tied together with the spirit of the newly outlawed pirate radio stations. With new songs like *Tattoo*, a sequence of PAMS/Radio London jingles, and original Who adverts for Rotosound Strings, the Speakeasy et al, the result was a winning mix of pop, psychedelia, Hendrix/Cream heaviness and pirate radio flash.

The original LP should be familiar to most readers, but this new edition adds a whole disc of studio sessions that are a pleasure: it's great to hear The Who in their pomp working things out. It also pulls the story forward to 1968 – a strange year of odd but fascinating singles like *Dogs* and *Magic Bus*, and their B-sides. Opening with the Pop Art of *Glow Girl* and containing the extraordinary *Melancholia*, Disc 4 hints at the path *Tommy* took, as well as a road untraveller.

Closing with a disc of 14 Pete Townshend demos – including *Beach Boys* pastiche *Inside Outside USA* – this box illuminates the difficult but inspired gestation of a major statement. Straddling surface and spirituality, naked commerce and psychological acuity, *The Who Sell Out* still remains fresh 53 years after its original release, and is thus worthy of this lavish and careful archive treatment.





**Pet Shop Boys**

★★★★★

Discovery: Live In Rio 1994

RHINO. CD+DVD

**“Previously only available on VHS” – a famous show in Brazil is dusted off.**

This self-parodic audio-visual revival gifts fans the feted Rio De Janeiro two-nighter of Pet Shop Boys’ 1994 itinerary through Singapore, Australia and Latin America. Those who missed the jubilant shows can only imagine those wacky Beatle wigs, illuminated dunce caps, Montezuma staircase and quartet of down-to-their-undies cage-dancers, all the better, perhaps, to appreciate the sweet soul vocals of PSB’s one-woman chorus, Katie Kissoon. The 21-song setlist mines five albums’ worth of po-faced suburban disco, whose costume-changing zeal falls largely to Neil Tennant, who should not have agreed to a Comic Relief rendition of Absolutely Fabulous (which they didn’t even write): a tonal emergency resolved by a full-throttle cover of Blur’s Girls & Boys.

Fans will appreciate the standard definition transfer, booklet, photos and tour diary, but it will not have escaped the duo’s attention that Brazil’s motto is “Ordem e Progresso” (“Order and Progress”). A sated multitude file out into the warm night to the stirring sound of Ethel Merman.

Andrew Collins



**Fleetwood Mac**

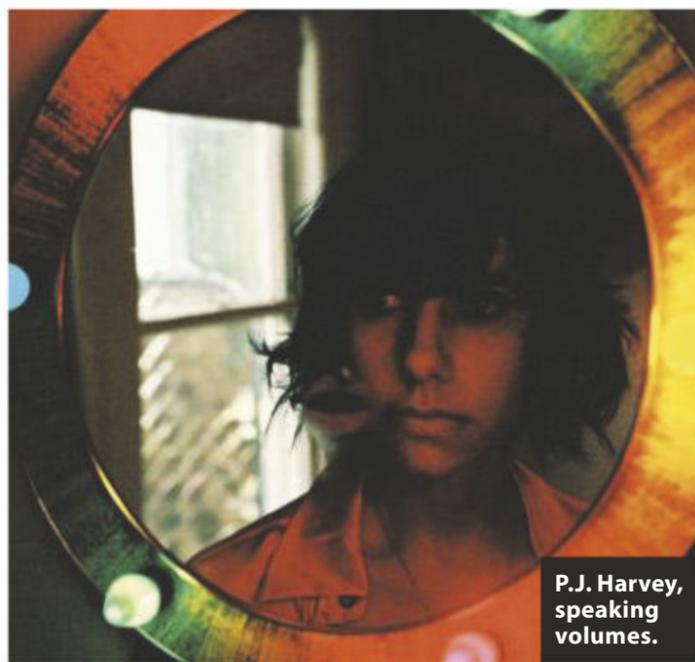
★★★★★

Live (Super Deluxe)

RHINO. CD/LP

**Edgy Tusk-era set, with bonus live tracks from 1977-82 on CD or two LPs plus 7-inch.**

Fleetwood Mac were the biggest band in the world when they recorded this 1980 concert LP, but there’s little triumphalism. Instead, the awkward silence that follows Christine McVie’s announcement they’ll be playing tracks from *Tusk* speaks to how misunderstood their ambitious opus was upon release. *Live* captures the Mac on bruised form, swinging violently between wired (manic, ragged Not That Funny, blackly metallic I’m So Afraid) and fragile (movingly intimate Landslide; epic, mystical Sara). As unflinching and unvarnished as their drugged-out portraits on the inner sleeve, it’s a *verité* document of



**P.J. Harvey, speaking volumes.**

a band on the edge, but with many moments of brilliance, not least a hushed backstage cover of The Beach Boys’ Farmer’s Daughter. Highlights of the bonus live tracks include an infernal Sisters Of The Moon and a searing The Chain.

Stevie Chick

brightly as the singer of Best Of Both Worlds, a New York rock-funk ensemble. He then joined forces with Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards to sing in the Big Apple Band, the precursor to Chic, and indeed, Love Rite and Saturday here mark their debut recordings on vinyl. Out of the band by 1977, after one further album, Cotter vanished: not to an acid-drenched netherworld, but becoming a successful computer programmer. *Missing You* is a real find – all the Chic components are in place on their two tracks (Cotter’s co-write, Saturday, went on to become a disco standard) – but the other numbers, backed by Best Of Both Worlds, are more spiritual and soulful, notably God Bless The Surefire People and Three Wise Men, sweet and spaced-out.

Daryl Easlea

**The Yardbirds**

★★★★★

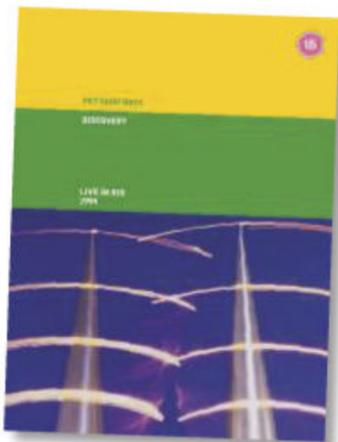
Yardbirds (Roger The Engineer) Super Deluxe Edition

DEMON. 2-LP+3-CD+7-INCH

**Surely the final word on the storied group’s only UK studio album.**

The music is, of course, great – capturing the extraordinary Yardbirds flying high in 1966, still respectful of their blues beginnings (Rack My Mind) but grasping the possibilities of psychedelia (Over Under Sideways Down). Why this ‘Super Deluxe’ version over the previous reissues, though? Firstly, the sound: original co-producer Paul Samwell-Smith has overseen the project and gone back to the original tapes; secondly, its comprehensive nature. Housed in a 12-inch lift-top box, we get the mono and stereo versions, on individual vinyl and CD respectively, the contemporaneous Happenings Ten Years Time Ago on 7-inch in period sleeve, a bonus CD of non-album singles and alternate mixes, plus a lavish booklet and A2 fold-out poster. There’s only one previously unissued track, an early mix of Turn Into Earth. But still, what’s not to love?

Lois Wilson



**VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH**

**Various**

Impulse! Records: Music, Message And The Moment

IMPULSE!

**RIGHT FROM** its inception in 1961 as the jazz imprint of ABC/Paramount Records, a well-heeled major pop label, Impulse! had the creative mindset of an independent record company. Initially founded by producer Creed Taylor, Impulse!

evolved under his successors (Bob Thiele and Ed Michel) into an entity that became synonymous with musical revolution, spiritual enlightenment, Afrocentrism, and socio-political commentary during a turbulent time in American history. Those themes resonate deeply in the grooves of the 25

tracks on *Music, Message And The Moment*, a 4-LP set celebrating the iconic jazz label’s 60th anniversary. Ranging from the spiritual exaltations of the Coltranes (John and Alice) to the astral travels of Pharoah Sanders and the earthbound, bluesy soul-jazz of organist Shirley Scott and saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, the retrospective takes

the listener on an exhilarating journey through varied sonic landscapes. The aesthetically pleasing package includes two magazine-style booklets and a vinyl slip mat.

Charles Waring



**P.J. Harvey**

★★★★★

Uh Huh Her/Demos

UMC/ISLAND. CD/DL/LP

**Polly Harvey’s transitional sixth album.**



Released four years after the glancing pop crossover of 2000’s *Stories From The City, Stories From The Sea*, *Uh Huh Her* initially seemed like a sideways step. One of Polly Harvey’s working notes to herself read “too PJ H?” but there was a slight over-familiarity here, songs collating the brackish atmospheres of *Is This Desire?* (The Slow Drug), *To Bring You My Love*’s swampy fables (No Child Of Mine), or *Rid Of Me*’s army-booted rage (Who The Fuck?). Yet now, standing alone and accompanied by typically illuminating demos (in particular The Pocket Knife and a brutal Who The Fuck?), themes of romantic dysfunction and lingering despair (“shame is the shadow of love”) are clearly articulated against the title’s rock’n’roll mumble. A collection of great songs rather than a unified whole, *Uh Huh Her* still speaks volumes.

Victoria Segal

Maria Mochnac



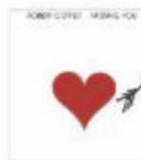
**Bobby Cotter**

★★★★★

Missing You

WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

**Super-rare super-groove from Chic’s first vocalist.**



Robert Cotter’s debut album, *Missing You*, was released briefly on Morris Levy’s tax-loss label Tiger Lily in 1976. Cotter burned briefly and



**Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young**

★★★★★

Déjà Vu: 50th Anniversary Deluxe Edition

RHINO. CD/LP

CSNY's March 1970 debut turns 50: 4-CDs plus the original album on 180g LP or 5-LP editions.

Before *Déjà Vu* was even released, it sold two million advance copies. It didn't hurt that three-quarters of the band, David Crosby, Stephen Stills and Graham Nash, had gone Top 10 the year before with their mellow beauty of a debut. Nor that, after Neil Young joined, they played both Woodstock and Altamont and were hailed as spokesmen for their generation. Their 10-song debut, an ambitious mix of harmony and melody with dark, heavy guitars, did not disappoint. Nor does this latest reissue – a remastered original plus a CD each of demos, outtakes and alternative versions – other than the shortage of Young material, which was Young's decision, so the star count stays intact. The quantity and quality of the songs they have unearthed that didn't make it onto *Déjà Vu* is pretty amazing. Among the highlights: Croz's Song With No Name and Laughing; Stills' So Begins The Task and Bluebird Revisited; Young's Birds, with Nash on harmony; and an intimate recording of Nash's Our House, with a delighted Joni Mitchell singing along.

Sylvie Simmons

**The Mars Volta**

★★★★★

La Realidad De Los Sueños

CLOUDSHILL. LP

Dormant prog rockers collate their discography and archival relics.



For some, The Mars Volta – the group forged from the ashes of At The Drive-In – remain one of the most inventive and compelling rock acts of the millennium era. For others they represent a black hole of musical self-absorption and unregulated prog excess. There is abundant evidence to support both arguments in this sprawling 18-LP box set collating their debut EP and six studio albums – all newly

remastered – plus rarities. Of principal interest is Landscape Tantrums: the unfinished original recordings of their grandstanding debut *Deloused In The Comatorium* which were later finessed by Rick Rubin. On *Drunkship Of Lanterns* and *Inertiac ESP*, the raw master tapes capture a band with a stunning sense of imagination and intensity. For the unconverted, this box set will likely astound and frustrate in equal measure. But for Volta's loyal disciples, it is a prayer answered.

George Garner

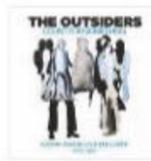
**The Outsiders**

★★★★

Count For Something: Albums, Demos, Live & Unreleased 1976-1978

CHERRY RED. CD

Exhaustive 5-CD exhumation of ahead-of-their-times punks.



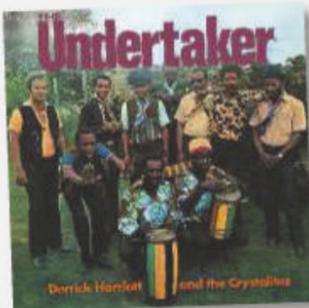
In 1999, Adrian Borland's suicide left a legacy that chiefly revolved

around his '80s near-misses *The Sound*. Before that, though, there were The Outsiders, formed at school by Borland in 1975. These 71 tracks (just the 47 previously unreleased) comprising both their albums, a live show, demos and oddities are spread over five CDs. Such depth is over-egging the pudding, of course, but The Outsiders deserve more than footnote status. Released just three months after *Marquee Moon*, 1977's *Calling On Youth* owed more to Television than just Borland's vocal similarity to Tom Verlaine. When they weren't being bog-standard first-generation punks, The Outsiders were a more musically complex proposition entirely, as *Start Over* and *Walking Through A Storm* twist and writhe as if Television hailed from Wimbledon. Curiously, they regressed and ditched that complexity on the following year's *Close Up*, which was snappier, more direct, but less adventurous.

John Aizlewood

**COMING NEXT MONTH...**

Can, Mdou Moctar, Hailu Mergia, Gary Numan, Greentea Peng (pictured), Liz Phair, John Grant, Don Cherry, Crowded House, Gang Of Four, Georgia Ann Muldrow, Amy Winehouse and more...



**Derrick Harriott And The Crystalites**

★★★★★

The Undertaker

DOCTOR BIRD. CD

From 1970, The Dynamites play Upsetters-like instrumental reggae: LP has 14 bonus cuts: a second disc adds another 27 Harriott productions. *IH*



**Gladys Knight & The Pips**

★★★★★

The Hits 1973-1985

UNITED SOULS. LP

Double vinyl of 19 post-Motown chart showstoppers, mostly on Buddah, featuring Knight's full range – heartbreak to joy. Immaculate readings of some excellent songs from one of the great voices of the era. *GB*



**The Selecter**

★★★★★

Too Much Pressure

CHRYSALIS. CD/LP

This 3-CD remaster of 1980's 2-Tone debut (plus bonus live and non-LP material) thumps home what a powerhouse unit the original Selecter were, with Charleys Anderson (bass) and Bembridge (drums) excelling. Also out on 45rpm vinyl. *KC*



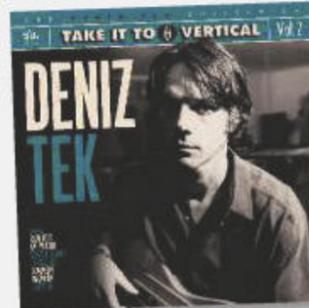
**Linda Smith**

★★★★★

Till Another Time: 1988-1996

CAPTURED TRACKS. CD/DL/LP

A Baltimore veteran of bedroom 4- and 8-track recording, this set of Smith's lo-fi cassette releases reveals soft echoes of the Velvets in meticulous melodies, dreamy Nico-ish voice and deadpan diary entry song-titles (*I So Liked The Spring*). *JB*



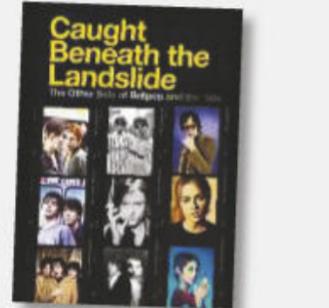
**Deniz Tek**

★★★★★

Take It To The Vertical

WILD HONEY. LP

1992 solo debut by Radio Birdman founder Tek. Recorded in Texas with Stooges drummer and Ann Arbor scene peer Scott Asheton, there's less Detroit wailing, more dark country-Stones prowling (*Steel Beach*) and R&B groovin' (*Dead If Looks Could Kill*). *JB*



**Various**

★★★★

Caught Beneath The Landslide

DEMON. CD/LP

Photographer Kevin Cummins does a 4-CD '90s indie mixtape to go with 2020's Britpop book: surprise choices by top names, desperate hopefuls, remixes and the odd 'why?' make the reviled decade seem like a lost lagoon of fun, warts and all. *IH*



**Various**

★★★★★

Northern Soul's Classiest Rarities Volume 7

KENT. CD/DL

Two dozen diligently sought-out dancers chosen by Ady Croasdell from acetates, tapes etc. Familiarity of arrangement is key as unknowns (Ray Gant; Isaiah Smith, he's a bit like Darrell Banks) and proven voices treat ears and feet. *GB*



**Sly & The Viscaynes**

★★★★

Yellow Moon

ACE. CD/DL

*The Complete Recordings 1961-1962* are 19 mostly doo wop songs by Sylvester Stewart's Vallejo teen group; a few are Sly solo 45s as Danny Stewart. His lead on *Real, True Love*, their Coasters-like *Uncle Sam Needs You* and a classic cover of *Oh What A Night* are fascinating. Good note by Alec Palao. *GB*



**Mary Wilson**

★★★★

Mary Wilson: Expanded Edition

MOTOWN/UME. CD/DL

The late Supreme's only solo LP, with fans' favourite *Red Hot*, now has four previously unreleased tracks, three produced by Gus Dudgeon – a ballad (*Love Talk*), beatier rock (a Tina-like tilt at CCR's *Green River*) and a cover of disco hit *Save Me*. *GB*

**RATINGS & FORMATS**

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL  
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VIDEO DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★ MOJOCCLASSIC

★★★★ EXCELLENT

★★★ GOOD

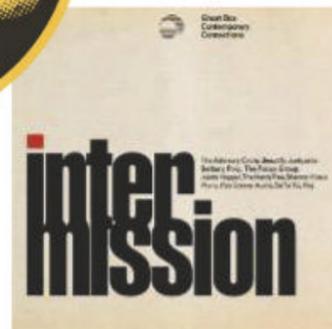
★★ DISAPPOINTING

★ BEST AVOIDED

☆ DEPLORABLE



The fun doesn't stop here: The Focus Group's Julian House, co-founder of the Ghost Box label.



## 10 Various Intermission

GHOST BOX 2020, £7.99

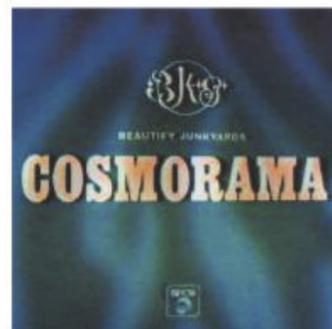
A pause for thought that also provides the perfect sampler for where the label is at right now.

Ghost Box and their many friends adopt a 'keep calm and carry on' approach with this "response" to the global Covid pandemic and lockdown. In their healing *Intermission* you'll find 18 tracks of wonderful variety: from the beautiful pastoral symphony of Woodberry Vale by The Hardy Tree, AKA Clay Pipe label founder and illustrator Frances Castle, through the *I Hear A New World* madness of The Animal Door by former Broadcast keyboardist Roj Stevens (his first recording since 2009's *The Transactional Dharma Of Roj*, which almost made this list), to the deep emotional connect of Tell Me Why by Sharron Kraus, and Plone's joyful ident Running And Jumping. Soothing music for difficult times.



### CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you were introduced to the Ghost Box label. Next month we want your Stiff label Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to [mojo@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mojo@bauermedia.co.uk) with the subject 'How To Buy Stiff Records' and we'll print the best comments.



## 4 Beautify Junkyards Cosmorama

GHOST BOX 2020, £14.95

Lisbon outfit's futurist dream pop retreat.

There's an inbuilt timelessness to Beautify Junkyards' work, with their verdant electric-acoustic Eden created amid a framework of classic pop, onto which they delicately apply Tropicália, acid folk and shoegaze. Obvious touchstones are Os Mutantes and Broadcast, but on this blissed out fourth album – their second for Ghost Box – they transcend these antecedents and come of age. From the lush opener Dupla Exposição and giddy title track, sung by Smoke City's Nina Miranda, to the haunted mood of A Garden By The Sea, featuring the classical and contemporary harpist Eduardo Raon, and transportive closer The Fountain, *Cosmorama's* 11 songs work as a manifesto for both group and label.

Getty

# Ghost Box

A hauntological survey of "a very British" label. By Lois Wilson.

IN 2020, Paul Weller's *In Another Room* EP was released on the 'hauntological' Ghost Box label, giving him the chance to explore his more outré tendencies. He describes the experience as: "A portal into another world. Something both familiar and half remembered and very British but also something very strange. No one else is doing what Jim [Jupp] and Julian [House] are. It's unique, and a total labour of love."

That labour began in 2004 when Jupp, an architect technician, and his pal House, a graphic designer, set up Ghost Box as a website to sell CDRs of their respective bands on a burn-to-order basis. Jupp's Belbury Poly and House's The Focus Group specialised – and still do – in that creation of "another world", a preternatural parallel reality of post-war Britain, via a carefully choreographed set of 'what ifs', explored through primitive electronica, found sound, folk song, psychedelia, library music, horror soundtrack and lavish packaging. The name Ghost Box referred to the co-founders' moniker for a TV, the phrase directly inspired by '70s

school programme Picture Box.

Through word of mouth, the label found a small, committed fanbase, and in the mid-2000s became the flagship of a short-lived, but fecund scene including label allies Trunk Records and Mordant Music.

It was through 2009's Broadcast and Focus Group collaboration *Investigate Witch Cults Of The Radio Age*, issued on Warp, that Weller discovered their vivid arcana. "I loved that record and followed the threads, through The Focus Group to Julian to Ghost Box. I like the immersive quality, the music, the artwork, it all fits together."

Indeed, a strong sense of identity pervades Ghost Box's catalogue, music and design running in tandem. House's style, like the music, draws on what he and Jupp call "faulty memory", a misremembered past of public information films, school textbooks, and in the case of their desirable Study Series of 45s, Romek Marber designed Pelican paperbacks from the '60s, summoning a sense of familiarity but also enduring enigma.

"That's the key," says Weller. "The feelings it evokes, it really resonates with something from your childhood, but you can't quite put your finger on it. But whatever it is, it's good."

"I like the immersive quality... it all fits together."

PAUL WELLER

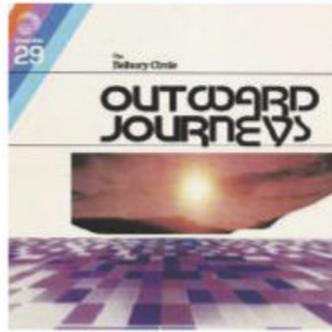


**9 Plone**  
Puzzlewood

GHOST BOX 2020, £14.95

**A triumphant return from the reconfigured duo who began in the '90s.**

A pivotal influence on Jupp and Belbury Poly, the John Peel-endorsed Plone – their original line-up consisted of Mike 'Billy' Bainbridge, Michael Johnston and Mark Cancellara – played an integral part in the '90s retro-futurist scene in Birmingham that included Broadcast and Pram. After two albums they disbanded in 2001, reuniting 19 years later as a duo – sans Cancellara, who now works as a DJ – releasing this comeback, comprising reconstructed material written over the interim period. A kaleidoscopic box of synthetic delights, Puzzlewood's 14 tracks are playful and buoyant with melody. Executed with a lightness of touch, they could very well have been themes to a forgotten late-'70s or early-'80s children's TV show.

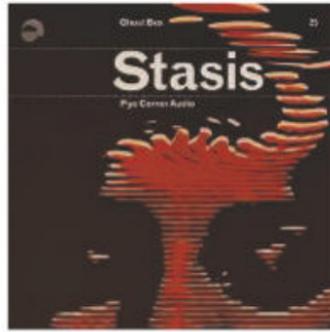


**8 The Belbury Circle**  
Outward Journeys

GHOST BOX 2017, £11.95

**Vestigial sound experiments from a Ghost Box super-group of sorts.**

This is the first full-length album from Jupp and Jon Brooks of The Advisory Circle, who come together to pay homage to the birth of the digital era. With the utilisation of analogue sequencers and primitive sampling, they conjure the wide-eyed wonderment of kids in the 1970s watching the utopian possibilities unfold on Tomorrow's World. Friend of the label and electronic avatar John Foxx gives his stamp of approval too, adding vocals and synthesizers to the psycho-geographical Trees and Forgotten Town. It's also worth tracking down The Belbury Circle's first EP from 2013, Empty Avenues, which also features the original Ultravox singer.

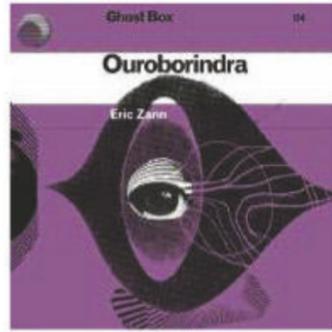


**7 Pye Corner Audio**  
Stasis

GHOST BOX 2016, £10.95

**Uneasy listening from the brainchild of synth outsider Martin Jenkins.**

Jenkins' often chilling soundscapes join the dots between science fiction – quotes from writers Arthur C Clarke and Ursula K Le Guin adorn the sleeve artwork to *Stasis* – English horror soundtracks and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. Jupp calls these alluring innovations "sci-fi slow disco": *Stasis*, Jenkins' third Ghost Box album and follow-up to 2012's also-excellent Ghost Box debut *Sleep Games*, is just that, a somnambulistic post-rave dancefloor sound, with a hint of John Carpenter and Tangerine Dream also thrown in. He's since recorded 2019's Pye Corner Audio long-player *Hollow Earth*, another sonic pleasure; also check out his recordings as The Head Technician and The House In The Woods.



**6 Eric Zann**  
Ouroborindra

GHOST BOX 2005, £25

**In the eye of the electric storm: Jim Jupp creates a horror reverie.**

Jupp fashions a tale of gothic proportions on this, the sole album to date recorded under his alias of Eric Zann – the name taken from a short story by HP Lovecraft. Playing with the notions of residual haunting and communication with the dead, he sends out a spiritual telegraph in an attempt to connect with the voices trapped within the static crackling from an untuned radio. Lose yourself in the concept and this can become hide-behind-the-sofa stuff as Jupp manipulates ancient oscillators, audio equipment, found sound and natural acoustics to summon spectral chills and hallucinogenic fever. Quotes from Nigel Kneale's 1972 TV play *The Stone Tape* on the inner sleeve further add to the creepy vibes.

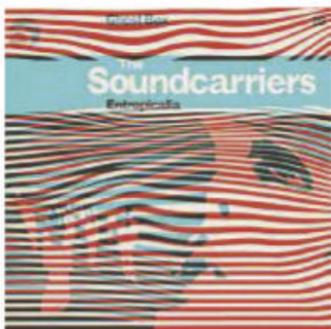


**5 The Advisory Circle**  
From Out Here

GHOST BOX 2014, £14.95

**Messing about with home-built electronics and analogue synths creates a blueprint for audio theatre.**

Jupp calls him, "The master of electronic pieces", a tag borne out by a quick survey of composer, producer and engineer Jon Brooks' back catalogue: three albums of conceptual atmospheres recorded as King Of Woolworths, various one-offs under his own name, and two further LPs as Georges Vert and D.D. Denham for his own Cafe Kaput label. Plus, five LPs as The Advisory Circle for Ghost Box. This was his fourth for the label and followed 2012's bucolic *As The Crow Flies* to stake out a John Wyndham-esque fantasy scripted around the idea of a perfect rural idyll, manipulated, even generated, by AI. Despite the dark concept, these analogue instrumentals are filtered with light.

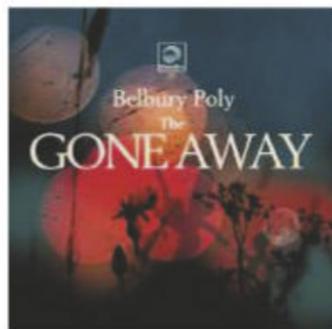


**3 The Soundcarriers**  
Entropicalia

GHOST BOX 2014, £75

**Sweeping popsike from Notts four-piece. Elijah Wood and Jesse Chandler guest.**

Nottingham four-piece The Soundcarriers, formed in 2007, comprise Adam Cann, Paul Isherwood, Dorian Conway and Leonore Wheatley. In 2009 and 2010 they released two albums on Melodic before recording this sole outing for Ghost Box. Taped in an empty warehouse, with electricity via cables from outside and hot water bottles stuffed up jumpers to keep warm, they channel psych energy and a love of kosmische, to create a widescreen sound shot through with space-age exotica and radiating heat. Highpoints include *Lose The Feel*, diaphanous folk with Jesse Chandler of Midlake on flute, and *This Is Normal*, a 12-minute freakout narrated by actor Elijah Wood with Chandler adding Philicorda, B3 Hammond and flute.



**2 Belbury Poly**  
The Gone Away

GHOST BOX 2020, £14.95

**Jupp goes back to basics in documenting sinister faerie sightings.**

On this seventh album, the follow-up to 2016's *New Ways Out*, Jupp revisits Ghost Box's hauntological roots with this three-years-in-the-making album inspired by the faerie folklore of the British Isles. These are not the twee, unthreatening creations depicted in Cicely Mary Barker's children's books, but the creatures of a more unnerving variety that inhabit the stories of Arthur Machen and HP Lovecraft. Jupp also takes complete creative control here: composing, producing, arranging and playing a miscellany of instruments – recorder, ocarina, mellotron, Moog etc – in his search for ingress into their secret world. It's a considerable achievement in vision and scope, totally discombobulating but utterly enthralling.



**The Focus Group**  
The Elektrik Karousel

GHOST BOX, 2013

**Julian House's comprehensive mapping of the curious cultural landscape at the heart of Ghost Box.**

Where The Focus Group's previous outings were constructed around psychedelic sound cut-ups to create the aural equivalent of his collaged sleeve designs – captured best on *Hey Let Loose Your Love* from 2005 – this excellent fourth album from the alias of Ghost Box co-founder Julian House is more closely aligned to the broader sonic palette of 2009's *Broadcast* and The Focus Group's *Investigate Witch Cults Of The Radio Age*. In fact, *Broadcast* were again credited with assisting House in his scherzo reconfiguring of English psychedelic whimsy through a voluptuary of sonic tributaries stretching into a spacious sonic hinterland: Czech animation, Italian giallo, early BBC Radiophonic Workshop moves and, again, HP Lovecraft. The fun doesn't stop there: the album's sleeve, inspired by the underground press of the 1960s, is designed in such a way that it can also be played as a board game.

**NOW DIG THIS**

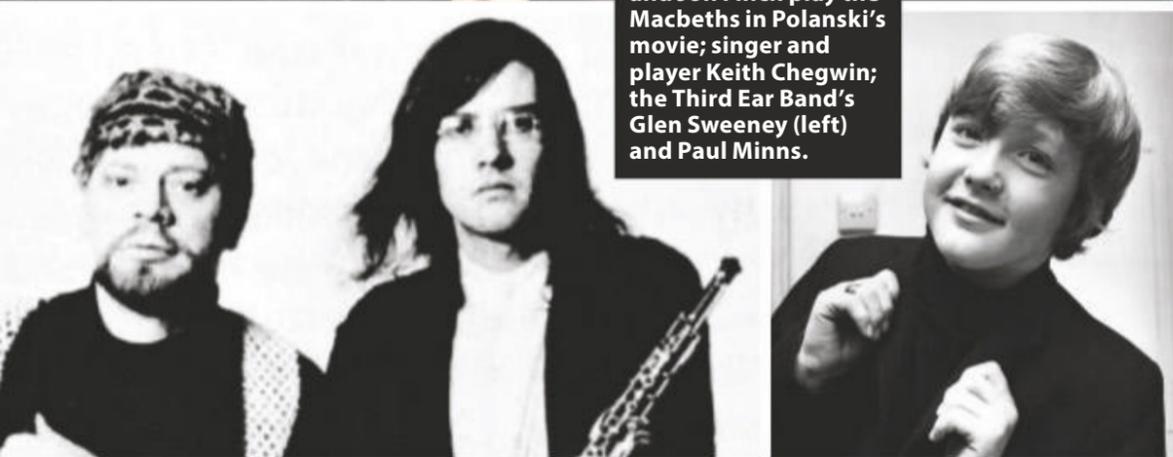


Ghost Box's bijou 7-inch catalogue also sculpts its own mystic Arcadia. Particularly nourishing for both the eyes and the ears are the Study Series, a set of 10 split 7-inches released between 2010 and 2013 featuring collaborations with likeminded guests including Broadcast, Trunk Records and Moon Wiring Club. Its follow-up series, Other Voices, delivered another set of 10 singles spanning 2014 to 2018, including Berlin-based acts Cavern Of Anti-Matter and ToiToiToi AKA Sebastian Counts. Also check out MOJO's guest editor's *In Another Room* EP from 2020, wherein he explores bird-song and wonky electronica to great effect.

*Special thanks to Jim Jupp.*



Get your gory locks off (clockwise from top): Francesca Annis and Jon Finch play the Macbeths in Polanski's movie; singer and player Keith Chegwin; the Third Ear Band's Glen Sweeney (left) and Paul Minns.



**CREDITS**

**Tracks:** Overture/ The Beach / Lady Macbeth / Inverness: Macbeth's Return-The Preparation-Fanfare-Duncan's Arrival / The Banquet / Dagger And Death / At The Well-The Princes' Escape-Coronation-Come Sealing Night / Court Dance / Fleance / Grooms' Dance / Bear Baiting / Ambush-Banquo's Ghost / Going To Bed-Blind Man's Buff-Requiescant-Sere And Yellow Leaf / The Cauldron / Prophecies / Wicca Way

**Personnel:** Paul Minns (oboe, recorder), Glen Sweeney (drms), Paul Buckmaster (cello, bs), Simon House (violin, VCS3 synth), Denim Bridges (gtr), Keith Chegwin (vcls)

**Producer/arranger:** Third Ear Band, Andrew King

**Released:** January 1972

**Recorded:** Air Studios, London

**Chart peak:** n/a  
**Current availability:** Esoteric CD (2019)

soundtrack's cues are short and intense. Building on the Sweeney/Minns core of hand drums, oboe and recorder with spider-like guitars, strings, electric bass lines and electronic sounds, its droning evocations of horror, murder and supernatural gloom echo northern European medieval rites and revels, but also head for Neolithic tombs of the Mediterranean and further east, with folk rock, (burial) chamber music and aleatoric elements adding to the occult mystique.

"It's kind of hard to place what they do," says Weller. "Is it avant-garde? Is it medieval music? It's like, halfway between early electronic music and madrigals! At first they sound really dissonant, but then after a while you work out that it's not – it's just a harmony you're not used to. It's not hippyish; it's brutal. Kind of harsh, but in a cool way."

The song Fleance uses an adaptation of Chaucer's 14th-century poem *Merciless Beauty*, sung by future British TV presenter Keith Chegwin, then aged 14. "I presume Keith Chegwin came in and did it at Air with the group," says King. "He was a proper choirboy, he had a very good unbroken voice. It wasn't typical Third Ear Band – I think they thought it was a little bit coy and poppy, and a bit wet." Fleance later appeared in songs played on Johnny Rotten's Capital Radio appearance in '77.

When the film was completed, King recalls a party at a London Mexican restaurant with much dancing on tables. It premiered in London on January 31, 1972, with Princess Anne in attendance.

However, Third Ear Band did not achieve soundtrack success like *Tangerine Dream* or *Popol Vuh*. Buckmaster soon left – he'd already arranged for Bowie and the Stones – and in spring they lost their deal with Harvest. A new song-oriented album themed around Tarot cards for the Island label went unreleased, and the group went on hiatus in '74, finally disbanding in 1993. Paul Minns took his own life in 1997; Sweeney died in 2005.

"I don't think they ever thought they'd be a big group, but they wanted to make enough money to make it viable, and that did happen for a time," reflects King. "They sold rather more records than anyone would imagine – they always out-sold Kevin Ayers, for example.

And they should have got more film commissions, and probably should have done better... it's probably because they had a rotten manager – ie, me."

As for Weller, he admits he hasn't seen the film – "I'd like to" – but wouldn't mind more soundtrack work, after 2017's boxing drama *Jawbone*. "I'd like to do a horror," he says. "Not a slasher movie. I saw [2019 British psychological chiller] *Saint Maud* the other night – something like that..."

*Ian Harrison*

*Paul Weller was interviewed by Danny Eccleston.*

# Sound and fury

This month's conjuration chosen by Paul Weller: avant-garde medieval brutality for Shakespeare.

## Third Ear Band Music From Macbeth

HARVEST, 1972

TODAY, DIRECTOR Roman Polanski remains a fugitive from US justice, after he left the country in 1977 while awaiting sentencing for "unlawful intercourse with a minor."

Five years earlier he'd released his film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. His first project since his wife Sharon Tate was murdered by the Manson Family in Los Angeles in August 1969, it was rejected by the major US studios and was eventually financed by Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* organisation. Stricken with bad weather on-set in Wales and Northumberland, the violence-and-nudity-packed production went massively over budget and then bombed, losing more than \$3 million.

Less troubled by the curse of the Scottish Play was the haunting soundtrack by London transglobal, transtemporal ensemble the Third Ear Band. It's a favourite of MOJO guest editor Paul Weller. "I remembered the name from the music papers in the '70s, but I'd never listened to them," says Weller. "Since then I've listened to a few of their records but I love this one – I think it's really special."

The group came together in the later '60s, after percussionist Glen Sweeney's spells in such free-form freak collectives as *The Giant Sun Trolley* and *The Hydrogen Jukebox*. "Glen always claimed that he was a junkie who cured himself of heroin by taking lots of acid," says TEB manager and producer Andrew King. "He was a complicated, determined little chap – he wasn't a great drummer, but things happened around him and he attracted

good people, like Paul Minns – the Coltrane of the oboe!"

By 1971, Third Ear Band had opened for The Rolling Stones at Hyde Park and released two LPs and a soundtrack for German TV film *Abelard & Heloise*. Then the call came from Polanski's office. Now with cellist/bassist Paul Buckmaster, future Hawkwind/Bowie violinist Simon House and guitarist Denim Bridges in the ranks, they were hired to soundtrack the Bard's bloody tale of regicide, fatal flaws and devilish equivocation in medieval Scotland.

Band and manager went to Shepperton studios ("it was quite fun sitting in the canteen with all the film stars," says King) to confer as the production neared its end. When the film reached the editing stage, reels were brought two at a time to Air Studios on Oxford Circus. "They were played on a projector, and the band improvised to them, recording live," says King, who recalls three months of daily recording from summer 1971.

"There was the proper level of concentration for what was hard and tiring work. They'd do several takes but I don't remember any editing. Polanski was involved, he popped in. I think he thought Buckmaster was the easiest guy to deal with, but I don't remember him interfering in an A&R, why-don't-you-do-this? sort of way. I think he just felt he'd set it up and let it happen. He'd have known straight away if something was going wrong."

In contrast to the lengthy, floatational pieces so far recorded by the TEB, the



"It's like, halfway between early electronic music and madrigals..."  
PAUL WELLER

# Family Guy

Documentary based on Susanna Clark's journals and "the stuff that's real". By **Michael Simmons**.

## Without Getting Killed Or Caught

★★★★★

Dir: Tamara Saviano & Paul Whitfield

SLOW UVALDE FILMS. **ST.**

"HE DIDN'T CARE about mainstream music," said Susanna Clark of her husband Guy Clark. "His only desire was to write songs as great literature."

Few wrote and sang songs as literate as Guy Clark. His two most famous were LA Freeway and Desperados Waiting For The Train. This bio-doc's title is from the former – a tale of being stuck on notoriously labyrinthine Los Angeles roads. Like all of Clark's songs, its story can be extrapolated into a universal theme – in this case craving escape from some hellish place. The latter song was a tribute to the hard-ass drifters he grew up with in West Texas, but it's also about facing death with stoic strength.

Death pervades *Without Getting Killed Or Caught* and its three primary figures are gone: Guy and Susanna, and their best friend, the tragically fabled songwriter Townes Van Zandt. It's a true-life Jules Et Jim, an extraordinary love triangle filled with great



FILTER SCREEN

One from the heart: Susanna and Guy Clark.

music. Directors Saviano and Whitfield let Clark tell the story through readings of her journals by actress Sissy Spacek and excerpts from her tape recorder that she spoke to as if it was human.

Guy and Van Zandt met in Houston folk coffeehouses in the mid-'60s. While grieving his girlfriend's suicide, Clark fell in love with her sister Susanna Talley and they married. The peripatetic couple ended up in Nashville in 1971 and Guy got a song publishing deal. Susanna (a fine painter as well as songwriter) called their home "a hippy poet salon" where Guy mentored young 'uns like Steve Earle and Rodney Crowell. In 1975, he released his first album *Old No. 1*, a classic by every standard except commercially. He was unhappy with the production of his early records – he loathed attempts to commercialise and

preferred stripped-down instrumentation.

"I was cursed with artistic integrity," he says with no false modesty in one of the interviews he gave the film-makers. (Earle, Crowell, Vince Gill and other talking heads fill in the gaps.) By the late '80s, Clark began making simpler recordings and by '95 he reached the top of the Americana charts. "Guy Clark not only fit the aesthetic perfectly," recalls one friend, "he helped define it."

Meanwhile, the Clarks broke up and got back together, she wrote commercial country hits and Van Zandt drank himself to death. She was devastated and stayed in bed for 15 years until her death in 2012. Guy followed four years later. It's a sad story, but the art it produced transcends the pain, as does their passion. "It's a mythical love story," admits Guy in a film that's as soulful as its protagonists.

## Creation Stories

★★★★

Dir: Nick Moran

SKY CINEMA. **ST**

How a "wee ginger tool from Glasgow" became the "president of pop" – and lived.



"Most of this happened," the title credits state optimistically over Primal Scream's Rocks. Disclaimer duly filed at the start, Nick Moran pitches his Irvine Welsh/Dean Cavanagh-scripted take on Alan McGee's 2013 memoir as a crime caper narrated by the main protagonist: how a drug-addicted chancer blagged his way past the UK music biz gatekeepers and got away with millions before the dream soured over dinner with Tony Blair and Jimmy Savile. Cribbing the *Trainspotting* guide to pillzapping hedonistic fantasy ensures no time to dwell on some wonky chronology, and actually provides *Creation Stories* with its consistent saving grace in Ewen Bremner, whose portrayal of McGee, wired or humbled, stands out from the breathless caricaturisation. Amid many well-kent faces – notably Richard Jobson as McGee's violent dad – the

impressive Ciaran Lawless as young Bobby Gillespie begs a film of the G-man's forthcoming book *Tenement Kid*.

Keith Cameron

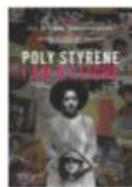
## Poly Styrene: I Am A Cliché

★★★★★

Dir: Celeste Bell and Paul Sng

MODERN FILMS/SKY ARTS. **C/ST**

The X-Ray Spex punk queen's legacy seen through her daughter's eyes.



"Creative people don't make the best parents. She neglected my needs at times," says Celeste Bell, co-director with Paul Sng, in this documentary about her mother Poly Styrene's life and legacy. Poly's diary entries (read by Ruth Negga), along with rare archive footage from *The Roxy* and '70s CBGB's, plus eyewitness interviewees such as Vivienne Westwood, Don Letts and Vivien Goldman, build a portrait of a half-Somali female punk pioneer who was ahead of her time, tackling themes of racism, identity and consumerism in her songs. But it's the personal story of

Celeste and her mother, becoming estranged through Poly's mental illness and neglect and then reconnecting with each other through music, that is the most moving aspect of the film, giving us insight into the troubled, sensitive thinker behind the iconic artist.

Lucy O'Brien

## The United States Vs Billie Holiday

★★★★★

Dir: Lee Daniels

SKY. **ST**

Biz-biopic brain full after *Bohemian Rhapsody*, et al? Make room for *Billie Holiday*.



Billie Holiday is indulgently reframed here by the playwright Suzan-Lori Parks and the movie director, Precious iconoclast and film-stock dilettante Lee Daniels, in what is a long, slow-motion McCarthyite assassination, except with enviable supper-club interludes. Brothel-raised, Lady Day's audacity was to showcase civil rights spiritual *Strange Fruit*. Diana Ross was here in 1972 (Lady Sings The

Blues), but this rich cast's revelation is fearless acting debutante and Stevie Wonder protégée Andra Day, whose smokin' vocals need no dubs. Events shape her Billie into an infuriating recreational pin-cushion, patted between Feds-under-the-bed and violent managers claiming to be saviours. Cruelly cuffed to a hospital gurney, she fobs off Bureau stalkers: "Your grandkids are gonna be singing *Strange Fruit*. Suck my black ass!" But Daniels saves his best provocation for the end credits, when Day discovers co-star Trevante Rhodes has two left feet.

Andrew Collins

## New Order

★★★★

Education Entertainment Recreation

WARNER MUSIC UK. **BR/CD/DVD/LP**

Substantial, multi-format document of band's only UK show of 2018.

"We're having a fucking great time up here," announces Bernard Sumner from Alexandra Palace's stage, pretending everyone agrees with him bar drummer Stephen Morris. "No," the singer reiterates, "it's

good fun." His typically dry assessment is also accurate: recorded on November 9, 2018, this show is a buoyant, generous-spirited journey around *New Order*. Initially, Mike Christie's film is unpretentious to a fault, bright footage of phone-wielding audience members and stark stage shots deadening any dazzle or mystique. Yet both band and film warm up fast, songs from 2015's *Music Complete* robust alongside *Ultraviolence* ("sounds a lot better now than it did in the old days") or a sing-along *Bizarre Love Triangle*. After an early *Disorder*, they end with a *Joy Division* set-within-a-set, images of Ian Curtis looming behind *Atmosphere*, *Decades* and *Love Will Tear Us Apart*. Exceeding the title's criteria – ambiguous "recreation" and all – it's a solid monument to their past and present.

Victoria Segal





THE  
SOUND  
MACHINE

# DO YOU HAVE A VINYL RECORD COLLECTION TO SELL?

We are interested in viewing ALL quality collections of vinyl records and CDs ANYWHERE throughout the UK and Ireland. We'll travel to you.

Contact The Sound Machine if you would like to talk with one of our specialists or to arrange a viewing appointment.

**Reading's Longest Established Independent Record Shop**

Specialists in buying and selling new and second-hand vinyl records and CDs across all genres.

✉ [info@thesoundmachine.uk.com](mailto:info@thesoundmachine.uk.com)

☎ 0118 957 5075 📞 07786 078 361



24 Harris Arcade, Reading,  
Berkshire RG1 1DN

[thesoundmachine.uk.com](http://thesoundmachine.uk.com)





Writing the signs: The Fall, Mark E Smith, far right.

**Bob Dylan: No Direction Home**

★★★★★

Robert Shelton

PALAZZO. £30

For Dylan's 80th birthday, a coffee-table-style return of the 1986 biography.



If Robert Shelton never wrote another word after his New York Times rave of Bob Dylan's set opening for The Greenbriar Boys in September 1961 – the review heard 'round the world – he would have a sacred place in the singer's tale. But the critic, who died in 1995, stayed close to Dylan, turning that proximity and trust into a landmark account of Dylan's genesis and ascension. Shelton brought investigative ardour to his access – he was the first writer to speak to Dylan's parents, blowing up the myths their son peddled to obscure his origins – while his lengthy interviews with the star caught him unfiltered and on fire, at historic crossroads. This generously illustrated update, based on Shelton's original preferred edit, published in 2011, has judicious cuts (such as Shelton's song-by-song LP breakdowns). The most puzzling trim: that '61 review, previously quoted in full but severely abridged here. If any book should have it intact, every time, it's this one.

David Fricke



**Medical Grade Music**

★★★★★

Steve Davis & Kavus Torabi

WHITE RABBIT. £20

Musical epiphanies from the avant-psych-prog odd couple.



It's always felt strange seeing Steve Davis behind the wheels of steel at rock gigs, as his career trajectory, from world snooker champion to DJ and synth player, is unique. Guitarist/singer Kavus Torabi has played in Guapo, Cardiacs, Knifeworld and Gong, and met Davis at a 2006 Magma show in Paris. The two friends DJ together and make music in The Utopia Strong. Both write well in contrasting styles – Davis droll and Torabi more flamboyant – and their age difference keeps this memoir format fresh: Davis was drawn to Magma, Gentle Giant and Henry Cow in the '70s, and the younger Torabi describes transformative experiences with Stray Cats, Iron Maiden and Voivod. Their enthusiasm jumps off the page. Torabi: "Music is the most important thing there is"; Davis describes the joy of his first recording session on modular synth having just hit 60, showing that for some, the feeling never goes.

Mike Barnes

**Rural Rhythm**

★★★★★

Tony Russell

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. £22.99

The story of Old Time Country in 78rpm records.



MOJO contributor Russell has assembled a number of outstanding essays inspired by the sounds emanating from a number of black shellac records first released during the 1920s, '30s and '40s. Some were primitive, offering versions of songs that were easily remade and reshaped by more talented artists in later years. Others were just poorly recorded, the victims of techniques yet to be discovered. But, as documented by Russell, they all offer aspects of lives and events that both inform and entertain. Commencing with The Little Old Log Cabin In The Lane by Fiddlin' John Carson, the first recorded song in country music history (1923), Russell then moves on to deal with such subjects as Darwinism, which was dealt a would-be musical body blow by You Can't Make A Monkey Out Of Me, and prohibition, which inspired Where The Roses Bloom For The Bootlegger. Social history has rarely been more deftly delivered.

Fred Dellar



**The World Of Bob Dylan**

★★★★

Ed: Sean Latham

CUP. £20

Bob Dylan vs the massed wonks of Cultural Theory. No, wait! Come back!



Livelier and richer in insight than a collection of essays from the quasi-academic zone of Dylan study (with titles including Judaism: Saturnine Melancholy And Dylan's Jewish Gnosis) promises to be, Sean Latham's symposium covers huge ground. Granted, some of it is dry: an appreciation of The Bob Dylan Brand appears to have been written by Colin The Energy Vampire from What We Do In The Shadows. Yet many of the contributions sing: Greil Marcus, typically 'where the fuck's he going now?' on blues and vengeance; the brilliant Ann Powers on physicality and sex in Dylan's work; an extremely sane and useful breakdown of Dylan biographies by Andrew Muir that deserves expansion – the logical next step of Dylanology is Bobliography. Slightly less satisfying are the trumpeted first fruits of deep delves into Tulsa's Dylan archive. To the question "What's in it?", Head Archivist Mark Davidson's answer seems to be: "Er, what isn't in it?"

Danny Eccleston

**Text Induction Hours**

Three ways to access the shadow world of The Fall.

By Ian Harrison.

**Excavate! The Wonderful And Frightening World Of The Fall**

★★★★★

Tessa Norton & Bob Stanley

FABER & FABER. £25

**The Otherwise**

★★★★

Mark E Smith & Graham Duff

STRANGE ATTRACTOR. £17.99

**Slang King: M.E.S On Stage 1977-2013**

★★★★★

Bob Nickas & Nikholis Planck

AT LAST. £30

"WHY DON'T you get your shit together," declared Mark E Smith, on-stage in Birmingham in March 1980, "and make it bad." Don't ask what the late Fall autarch meant: what made him tick has remained quantum-level elusive, existing in multiple states prised through alcohol, antagonism and slanted autodidacticism. Helpful, then, that these three books stir up the psychosediment by avoiding straight biography (the above quote is from Slang King, a collection of on-stage MES adlibs).

Blockiest and most free ranging is compendium/scrapbook Excavate! Therein, essayists including Michael Bracewell, Adelle Stripe and the late Mark Fisher chew over such Smith centralities as his class consciousness, sense of place, the everyday "weird"/occult that gave his output such fortifying strangeness, and beyond. There's much fun to be had: Ian Penman, reflecting on substances and addiction, compares MES to Margaret Thatcher, and wonders, "Does any contrarian start to repeat themselves just by being consistently contrarian?" Co-editor Stanley, by contrast, relates The Fall's "non-professional" status to low-

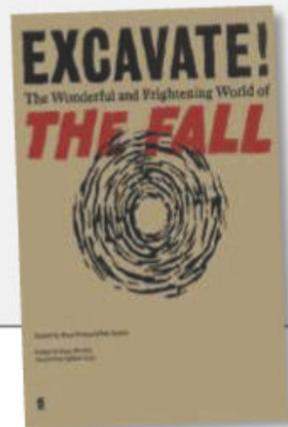
level football and persuasively casts Shakin' Stevens as the anti-MES.

It's punctuated by fabulous ephemera, vintage interviews and carbon-copied original lyric sheets – Smith rarely sanctioned this, so there's something almost indecent about seeing them – plus near-indecipherable handwritten notes from 2017, a poignant reminder of his courageous, boots-on last years. (Some readers may rebuff the more scholarly contributions with: "Academic male slags/Ream off names of books and bands" from 1981 fan-fave Slates, Slags Etc.)

Presenting Smith's 2015 script for a Fall-starring horror film, The Otherwise suffers from no such mitigation. With echoes of undead biker flick Psychomania, it finds MES depicting himself as spooked but composed when Jacobite ghosts appear. A touching foreword by Smith's wife Elena reveals his refreshingly broad telly habits (Eurovision, Keeping Up Appearances), though the real shocker is his plan for a musical where characters would lip-sync Fall songs.

Compiled by New York art curator Nickas and illustrated by Planck, Slang King is the lightest volume here, but its collection of verbal riffing gets you there anyway. As years and venues pass, lyrics escape their moorings into whatever was annoying Smith at that moment: cracked grist includes digs at Julian Cope, band splits (in real time at one 1998 NY show) and music biz perfidy. Quieter after 1983, in meltdown year '96 he confesses, "brother, I cannot write these signs any more," but a few pages later he's confounding a Cardiff crowd with the trenchant instruction, "Litmus stained. It was nutmeg. Hup!"

All worth a Fall watcher's attention, these books add to a vaster, ongoing, part-work biography, alongside such essential reads as bassist Steve Hanley's The Big Midweek, and volumes still to be written. The group's last album was 2017's *New Facts Emerge*, and in this ever-shifting *sui generis* musical dimension it seems they always will.



# REAL GONE

Roots, Radic, Rocker: Bunny Wailer in Notting Hill, August 1988: (opposite) in Kingston in later years; (bottom) starting out with The Wailers (from left) Bunny, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh.



# Blackheart Man

Revered reggae legend **Bunny Wailer** left us on March 2.

**R**EGGAE APOSTLE David Rodigan, who named Bunny Wailer's solo debut *Blackheart Man* as his favourite ever album, has likened the magnitude of the 1973 split of the original Wailers group to that of The Beatles. The comparison's easily extended: if revolutionary Peter Tosh was John Lennon and pop superstar Bob Marley was Paul McCartney, then the group's spiritual envoy and lower-key musical superpower – their George – was Neville O'Riley Livingston, better known as Bunny Wailer.

Short in stature but formidable in charisma and accomplishment, he was born on April 10, 1947 and raised in Kingston and rural Nine Mile, Jamaica. His father Thaddeus, AKA Mr Taddy, was a country shopkeeper and revivalist preacher, and from a young age Neville played drums in church. He was eight when his father started a relationship with Cedella Marley, and her son Bob duly became an admired de facto sibling. Bunny recalled playing bamboo guitar and singing to his older brother, yet it was Marley who made the first move into music. After cutting singles for the Beverley's label aged just 17, he impressed upon Bunny that they should form a band. Tutored by community-minded professional Joe Higgs, the group's crucial formation came together in Kingston's Trench Town when they were joined by singer and guitarist Peter Tosh.

Higgs drilled The Wailing Wailers in their harmonies – he had them sing in the cemetery "for the spirits", Bunny recalled – and the group would score a nationwide Number 1 in early 1964 with their debut single *Simmer Down*, a thrusting ska barnstormer instructing the capital's rudies to leave civilians alone. The same year the group were photographed in sharp suits: in 1979 the image would inspire Jerry Dammers' design for 2-Tone mascot *Walt Jabsco*.

Unremunerated, the group's progress was not easy. They persevered even when Marley was absent in the US in 1965, and, after he returned, carried on when Bunny was sentenced to 14 months in Kingston's General Penitentiary for marijuana possession in 1967. It was an experience that would colour his worldview and artistic life forever.

"I was sent to a university where I obtained all the knowledge that I would not have obtained had I not been in confinement," he reflected to MOJO's David Katz in 2009. "Babylon has made an error sending Bunny Wailer to prison, because... you have strengthened Bunny Wailer." He later insisted that he had no criminal record, and his sentence was due to administrative error.

On his release The Wailers got back to work, cutting some of their most essential recordings with Lee Perry and embracing Rastafari. The years



## THE LEGACY

**Album:**

*Blackheart Man*

(Island, 1976)

**The Sound:**

Infused with Rasta spirituality and consciousness (Fighting Against Conviction relates to his jail time, while the compassionate title track finds Christ-like transcendence and transformation), this exquisitely realised, soulful and melodious roots reggae album was the artistic equal of anything The Wailers did. His voice can be accusing as well as silken – see the end-times Armageddon (Armagedon) – but like eight-minute, nyabingi-country closer *This Train*, the ride's ultimately a transport of delight.

of struggle seemed to pay off when they signed an international deal with the Island label, touring the UK and America and releasing the *Catch A Fire* and *Burnin'* albums in 1973. Yet, wary of touring and suspicious of Island's promotion of Marley as solo star – and the overdubs which made the band more palatable to white rock audiences – Bunny chose to leave what he considered the "segregated" band, and was followed soon after by Tosh.

Explaining that he had "preserved" himself through Rastafari, his songwriting and voice would at last come into its own on 1976's roots masterpiece *Blackheart Man*. Featuring both of his former bandmates, it remains an album of remarkable scope, vision and emotive force. Significantly, it was named for a Jamaican bogeyman figure, recast with telling sympathy.

"That's what we were at first taught, that the Rasta man is the blackheart man," Bunny told Sounds' Vivien Goldman in 1976. "The blackheart man who will take you and carry you away and eat out your heart. [Eventually you] see that he's a man, that he has habits like a man... growing up, you realise – it's like yourself. It's like running from yourself."

Bunny would never run from The Wailers. He played the One Love peace concert alongside Tosh and Marley in 1978, recorded the superb *Sings The Wailers* collection in 1979, and never stopped covering Marley's material. He worked at his own pace and on his own terms, having set up his Solomonic label in 1972, playing live when he wanted to

and widening his stylistic range into dub, dancehall and – giving the lie to his stern reputation – disco and rap. 1980's party tune *Electric Boogie* would find US success when it was re-recorded by Marcia Griffiths in 1983, though in 2018 she was displeased

by reports that Livingston had indicated it was about a vibrator.

Quieter from 1990, he would settle into his roles as custodian of The Wailers' legacy and elder statesman of roots reggae, puffing on his pipe with a Lion Of Judah medallion on his forehead, referring to himself in the third person and dressed, sometimes, in the brilliant white uniform of a spiritual general.

Based at Dreamland Farm, the 142-acre estate in the hills outside Kingston which he posited as a future centre of legal ganja production, his later activities included

founding his United Progressive People's party, recording with his bandmates' sons Ky-Mani Marley and Andrew Tosh, revisiting *Blackheart Man* live in 2016, and, for his 70th birthday, launching a Bunny Wailer museum in Kingston. At the opening of this "tabernacle of The Wailers", packed with the trophies and memorabilia of a lifetime in music, he reflected, "Robert Marley can't tell 'im story. Peter Tosh can't tell 'im story. I have to be the one haffi tell all three Wailers' story... because I am the survivor. I am here representing what The Wailers stood for."

He had suffered a serious stroke last summer, soon after his wife Jean Watt, who had been diagnosed with dementia, had gone

missing from their home.

"Jah B brought good and righteousness through his life," said his family in a statement after his death, saluting their "spiritual leader, brother, father and lion."

Ian Harrison

"I am the survivor... representing what The Wailers stood for."

BUNNY WAILER





Chris Barber, urbane 'bone.

## Chris Barber

British music mainstay

BORN 1930

"Let us not talk of 'trad' and banjos and things," insisted Mike Hales' sleeve note for Chris Barber's landmark 1969 album *Battersea Rain Dance*. "Let us yet think of music and musicians, of mop tops and soul men, of jazz giants and fading, even dead, blues masters..."

What was true for that record – with its brilliantly unclassifiable two-minute Barber-penned title track, guest appearances from Brian Auger and Paul McCartney, and striking big-band beat-group versions of tunes by Charles Mingus, Curtis Mayfield and Joe Zawinul, among others – is doubly apt for Chris Barber's career as a whole. The urbane and open-minded trombonist and bandleader did as much as any other single musician to shape the British musical landscape of homegrown responses to black American innovation.

Born Donald Christopher Barber in Welwyn Garden City on April 17, 1930, he was the true Godfather of the British blues boom – giving Alexis Korner his big break and bringing Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Muddy Waters, Big Bill Broonzy, and Sonny Terry And Brownie McGee to Britain in the late 1950s. He was the midwife of British rock'n'roll, too, launching the skiffle boom by playing double

bass on his banjo player Lonnie Donegan's Rock Island Line single, which was recorded in downtime on a 1956 Barber studio session. His was also the first British group to play on the Ed Sullivan Show, selling a million copies of their 1959 version of Sidney Bechet's *Petite Fleur*.

In the '60s and '70s Barber established a particular rapport with jazz-lovers behind the Iron Curtain – a special relationship sealed with a double live album recorded in East Berlin. He carried on working right up to his retirement in 2019, touring the US and Europe, with the release of 2011's *Memories Of My Trip* – featuring collaborations with admirers including Van Morrison and Dr. John – a late career highlight. The whole thing seems to have been fun, though, and when this writer spoke to him (in 2018) about his amazing 1972 trad jazz/space rock crossover album *Drat That Fratle Rat!*, he fondly recalled playing a one-off gig with Rory Gallagher at a disused cinema in Swindon.

Ben Thompson

**"Chris Barber was the midwife of British rock'n'roll."**

## James Burke

Singer/guitarist

BORN 1950



A member of Chicago's The Five Stairsteps – 'The First Family of Soul' – James Burke hit the US pop Top 10 in 1970 with the uplifting O-o-h

Child, a much-covered and sampled song of new-dawn optimism. For the group, formed by patriarch and former Chicago detective Clarence Sr, it followed a run of 12 Top 40 R&B hits stretching back to 1966. Brothers Kenneth, Clarence Jr, Dennis, sister Alohe and James had signed to Curtis Mayfield's Windy City label after a talent show win. Following the Stairsteps' signature hit, written and produced by Stan Vincent for Buddah, they struggled to repeat the success, despite signing to George Harrison's Dark Horse label for 1976's Billy Preston-produced *2nd Resurrection*, and they split up soon after. Two years later they re-formed as The Invisible Man's Band, recording the disco hit *All Night Thing*, but again went their separate ways. James later focused on making art, which he'd studied in Chicago.

Geoff Brown

## Dan Sartain

Garage-rock outsider

BORN 1981

Raised in impoverished steeltown Fairfield, Alabama, Daniel Frederick Sartain debuted in ferocious post-hardcore unit Plate Six. In 2001-02 he cut two self-released albums of hollow-bodied guitar rock and got lucky when he foisted those self-releases on Rocket From The Crypt mainman John 'Speedo' Reis at a local show. Reis signed him to his Swami label for three colourfully lyrical, rockabilly-charged albums which duly

collided with the early-'00s garage-rock revival. Tours with The White Stripes and The Hives ensued, plus the eighth 45 on Jack White's Third Man Records. But 'the Cadaver from Alabama' (Reis's affectionate nickname for his haunted protégé) simply wasn't wired to capitalise: Sartain deviated into Ramones homage, Suicide-inspired coldwave and ultimately hairdressing, opening a barber's shop in Woodlawn, AL. Last October he was 'back', busting out live takes from Sun Studios. The cause of death was unconfirmed as MOJO went to press.

Andrew Perry

## Don Heffington

Roots-rock drummer

BORN 1950



Don Heffington's résumé is a working musician's pipe dream: Bob Dylan, Emmylou Harris, Jackson Browne, Dave Alvin, Dwight

Yoakam, The Wallflowers and many others. The Los Angeles native was taught drumming by his grandmother and played in a jazz quintet at 15, inspired by seeing John Coltrane live. Reflecting his stubborn diversity, he also fell in love with country music, and in the 1980s was a founding member of the band Lone Justice, the Maria McKee-fronted country-punkers thought to be destined for next-big-thingdom, only to be mismanaged. Heffington moved on, most famously playing with Dylan on the original tracks transformed into the classic *Brownsville Girl*. Recently he'd been blending folk and jazz, writing and singing originals such as John Coltrane *On The Jukebox*. "Don always made percussion an integral part of the conversation," says collaborator and friend Van Dyke Parks. "He wasn't a slave to genres."

Michael Simmons



Dan Sartain: Alabama Shaker.

Avalon.red, Getty (3)

## Bruce Hawes

Philly maestro  
BORN 1953



Though not as well-known as Gamble & Huff or Thom Bell – the songwriters, producers and chief architects of '70s Philadelphia

soul – Bruce Hawes co-wrote two of the City Of Brotherly Love's biggest R&B hits: The Spinners' *Mighty Love* (1974) and *Games People Play* (1975). A preacher's son who sang in a church choir, Philly-born Hawes was steeped in the sanctified cadences of gospel music but began writing secular songs in his teens, and in 1973 joined Thom Bell's production company as a staff songwriter. Under Bell, Hawes' talent rapidly blossomed and he went on to write for a raft of soul acts in the '70s and '80s, including

The Three Degrees, Gladys Knight & The Pips and Phyllis Hyman. In later life, Hawes left Philadelphia for Florida, where he continued to write and produce.

Charles Waring

## Malcolm Cecil

Synth wizard  
BORN 1937

As a young bassist in London, Malcolm Cecil spent the early '60s playing jazz and blues with the likes of Alexis Korner, Cyril Davies and Ronnie Scott. In 1968, having relocated to New York, he met Moog-owner Bob Margouleff. The two went on to build various analogue synthesizer modules into a semicircular, one-ton wall of polyphonic technology they called The Original New Timbral Orchestra, or TONTO for short. Named TONTO's Expanding Head Band after a concept glimpsed by Margouleff while tripping on



Malcolm Cecil: the analogue adventurer with TONTO.

peyote, two pioneering albums followed, and the duo would also play on and co-produce Stevie Wonder's 1972-74 run of classic LPs. The Isley Brothers, the Doobie Brothers and Randy Newman also called upon their synth expertise, before Margouleff split from the project in 1975. Cecil retained

custody of TONTO, and worked with Gil Scott-Heron, Quincy Jones, Steve Hillage and many others. In later life he ran a studio in upstate New York; TONTO was sold to the National Music Centre in Calgary in 2013, where it was fully restored and is still available for use.

Ian Harrison

## THEY ALSO SERVED

MUSIC EXECUTIVE **SALLY GROSSMAN** (below, b.1939) was a close associate of **Bob Dylan** and wife of Dylan's manager, Albert. She famously appears on the cover of *Bringing It All Back Home*, enigmatically smoking a cigarette on a chaise longue in a bright vermilion trouser suit.

Manhattan-born Sally Ann Buehler dropped out of college to join the Greenwich Village arts scene, meeting Albert Grossman while working in Café Wha?. Settling in Woodstock, the couple ran the Bearsville record label and recording studio, and later the Bearsville Theatre. In 2008 she curated a unique digital archive of the sacred Bengali music Baul.

HEADHUNTERS bassist **PAUL JACKSON** (b.1947) studied piano and bassoon before taking up standup bass aged nine. He joined **Herbie Hancock** for the jazz-fusion trailblazer's 1973 smash *Head Hunters*. After Hancock departed, Jackson and the other members stayed together; 1975's *God Made Me Funky* became an essential hip-hop sample. Other sessions included the **Pointer Sisters**, **Santana** and **Sonny Rollins**. He later recorded solo, worked in jazz education and lived in Japan. "He could create a new bass line on every tune every night," said Hancock, by way of tribute.



DUTCH ENGINEER **LOU OTTENS** (b.1926) showed his technical talent at an early age, devising a radio able to pick up jammed stations during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in the Second World War. When working for Philips in the '60s, he worked on portable

tape recorders, and led the team which developed the cassette, unveiled in 1963. He later reflected that he would change nothing about the design.

In the 1970s he was also involved in the development of the compact disc.

PHOTOGRAPHER and guitarist **BARBARA ESS** (below, b.1944) met **Glenn Branca** at an audition for **Theoretical Girls** in 1978. Their meeting sparked a personal and creative relationship that lasted over 20 years: as well as creating *Just Another Asshole* fanzine, she played with NY no wave groups **Y Pants**, **The Static** and later **Ultra Vulva**. As a photographer she explored the boundaries of perception, most famously in large-scale works created with a pinhole camera. In 2001 Ess and **Peggy Ahwesh** released their **Radio/Guitar** project on **Thurston Moore's**

*Ecstatic Peace* label, layering Ess's electric guitar over radio sounds.



POET and guitarist **MOHAMMED AG ITLALE**, AKA Japonais (b.1960) was an early member of **Tinariwen**. Born in Tessalit, in Mali's north-eastern Sahara region, like many young Tuaregs he received military training in Libya in the 1980s, meeting **Ibrahim Ag Alhabib** and other future band members at a rebel camp. As part of Tinariwen's mutable collective, Ag Itlale's lead guitar and vocals can be heard most prominently on 2006 album *Aman Iman: Water Is Life*, for which he wrote and performed *Ahimana*, a song about those early days in Libya, and *Awa Didjen*, lamenting the drought and famine that took the Tuareg people to Libya in the first place.

RAPPER **PRINCE MARKIE DEE** (b. Mark Morales, 1968) formed human beatboxing hip-hop trio **The Disco Three** in Brooklyn: after winning a talent show in 1983, they changed their name to the **Fat Boys**. Number 2 in 1987 with their **Beach Boys** team-up *Wipeout*, the following year they repeated the feat with *The Twist*, assisted by **Chubby Checker**. Not the most serious of rappers, they appeared in three films, including *Krush Groove* and the Three Stooges-like comedy *Disorderlies* (1987).

After leaving the group in 1989, he recorded solo, worked with **Mary J Blige**, **Mariah Carey**,

**Destiny's Child** and others, was a radio host, and took part in **Fat Boys** reformations.

KEYBOARDIST **MATT MILLER** (b.1987) was an original member of New Jersey punks **Titus Andronicus**. He was cousin to the group's frontman, **Patrick Stickles**: a photo of the pair as children features on the cover of TA's fifth LP, *A Productive Cough*, where Miller can also be heard amid a rabble of backing vocals. He sang lead on the title track to 2018 EP *Home Alone* (On Halloween) and has credits on 2010's *The Monitor* and *The Most Lamentable Tragedy* in 2015. Miller played *Money*, the rapping bartender in the pilot episode of *Stickles' sitcom*, *Stacks*, and is co-credited for additional jokes with **Ryley Walker**.

SONGWRITER **IAN NORTH** (right, b.1952) formed Long Island punk-poppers **Milk 'N' Cookies** in 1973. Too clean-cut for the times, their delayed 1976 album would not be a hit. North then moved to London and embraced punk to form the short-lived **Radio**, soon renamed **Neo** (North used the latter name for his 1979 solo album). An early adopter of synths for 1980's new wave solo LP *My Girlfriend's Dead*, he also worked with **The Fast**, ran a recording studio in Manhattan, and in 2009

released the album *EZ Listening For Suicides* as **Darkjet**. He declined to participate in 2005's *Milk 'N' Cookies* reunion.

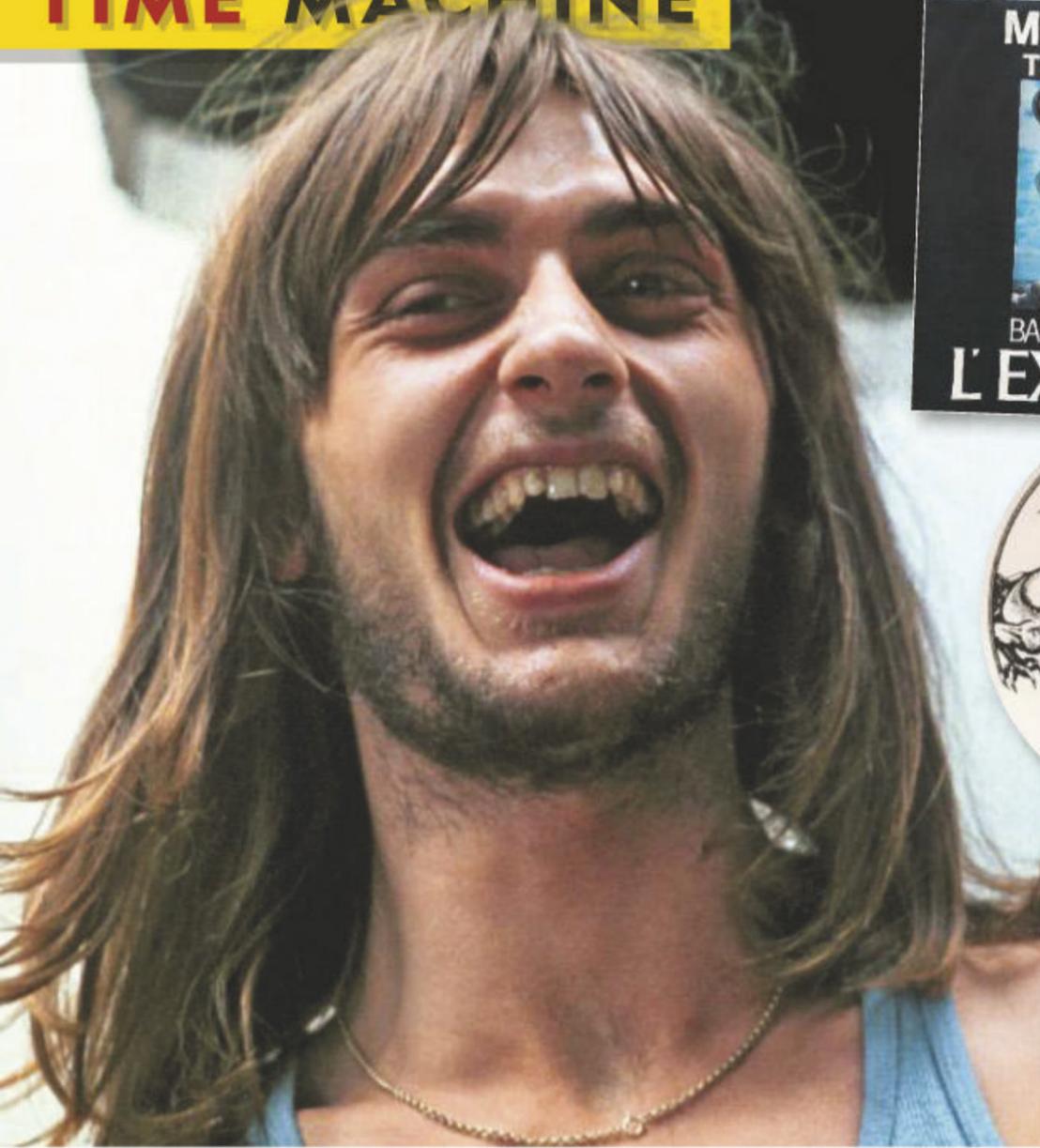
SINGER-SONGWRITER **JON MARK** (b.1943) played with **Marianne Faithfull** (he also arranged 1965's LP *Come My Way*), **Nicky Hopkins'** *Sweet Thursday* and **John Mayall's Bluesbreakers**. In the latter group he met sax player **Johnny Almond**: the duo formed jazz-rockers **Mark-Almond** in 1970, and released eight albums, the last being 1996's *Nightmusic*. Mark later recorded ambient music for his own *White Cloud* label in New Zealand, winning a Grammy in 2004 for his recording of the Tibetan chant of the Monks Of Sherab Ling Monastery.

SONGWRITER and actor **TREVOR PEACOCK** (b.1931) had a long TV career and is best known as Jim Trott from BBC sitcom *The*

*Vicar Of Dibley*. But in the '60s he also found huge success as a composer, his songs including the **Herman's Hermits** hit *Mrs Brown You've Got A Lovely Daughter*, **Jess Conrad's** *Mystery Girl* and **Joe Brown's** *That's What Love Will Do*, as well as singles for **The Vernons Girls**. He also wrote the lyrics for **John Barry's** *Beat Girl* film theme and **Alan Price's** musical based on *Andy Capp*.

Jenny Bulley and Clive Prior





Wrote this Bong for you (clockwise from left): Mike Oldfield enjoys his success; hit single and Virgin label; Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*; thrusting young record executive Richard Branson; (bottom, from left) *Tubular Bells* and, for 48p, *The Faust Tapes*.



# MAY 1973 ...the Virgin label launches with Tubular Bells

**MAY 25** "We are about to launch our own independent label," wrote Richard Branson, informing the vinyl outlets of Britain of the birth of Virgin Records. "If by chance, you're having difficulties... get in touch with us direct, by phone or letter, and tell us your problems."

Branson had his own problems to stay on top of. As well as Virgin Mail Order and record shops, he was running The Manor, his residential studio outside Oxford. In late '71, obsessive, introverted musical talent Mike Oldfield entered the picture. Born in 1953 in Reading, Oldfield had a troubled background, and talked of remembering the trauma of his own birth. Having joined Kevin Ayers' Whole World on bass at 16, he was working with Jamaican singer Arthur Louis when he played a demo to Manor engineers Tom Newman and Simon Heyworth. Branson and his second cousin Simon Draper, Virgin's A&R and marketing director, were duly advised to lend an ear.

"It was a beautiful haunting tape," said Branson, who would pitch it to six labels over the next 12 months. "[Eventually] I said, Screw it, let's start a record company and put it out ourselves."

Oldfield had multitracked the demo at home in Tottenham on a modified Bang & Olufsen tape deck borrowed from Ayers, employing organ, guitar, bass and, for its drone-like noise, a vacuum cleaner.

A classical and rock fan whose mind was blown by seeing Keith Tippett's prog big band Centipede, Oldfield told the BBC, "*Tubular Bells*, it was the result of my whole life up until the age of 18, 19."

Branson offered him studio time, finance, management services and a contract. Starting work in November '72, Oldfield began bringing his demo to fully-realised life,

**"I said, Screw it, let's start a record company and put it out ourselves."**

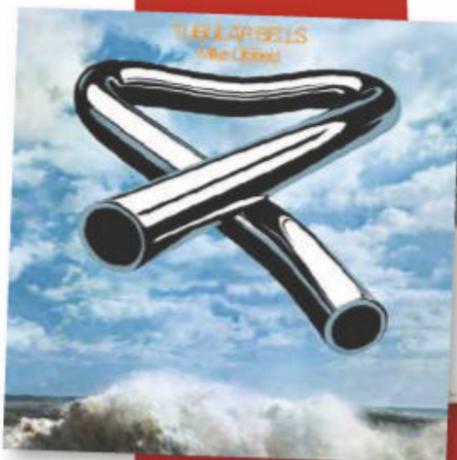
**RICHARD BRANSON**

playing nearly everything himself and putting his Telecaster through the home-made plywood effects box he called the 'Glorfindel'. The tubular bells, he explained, were being removed from the studio when he decided to use them. Also passing was Vivian Stanshall, there to record the Bonzos' farewell *Let's Make Up And Be Friendly*. Declared 'Master of Ceremonies,' he would list each instrument used for the finale of the opening 25-minute track. "Viv was standing next to me wearing a cowboy hat, reeling about because he was so drunk," Oldfield recalled to Q. "I had to write down the words and point at the appropriate word just before he was to say it."

Oldfield returned in February '73 to complete side two. The shifting nature of the album's two side-long tracks required much overdubbing and tape splicing – estimated by Newman at 70 to 80, rather than the thousands reported in the press. Branson wanted to call it *Breakfast In Bed*: appalled, Oldfield suggested *Tubular Bells*, after Stanshall's cheery enunciation of the same. Another crucial element was the cover art's twisted, chromium-plated bell, designed and photographed in hyperreal style by Trevor

Key. Response to the unusual and mesmeric album was rapturous: Observer/Spectator critic Tony Palmer wrote that it owed much to "Sibelius, Vaughan Williams, Michel Legrand, and *The Last Night Of The Proms*," while John Peel played all of side one on his May 29 show.

Virgin released other albums on the same day: *Flying Teapot* by Australian-French cosmic-proggers Gong, the star-packed *Manor Live* by Steve York's



Camelo Pardalis and Faust's schizoid, Dadaesque *The Faust Tapes*. All sold for a reasonable £2.19, apart from the Faust LP, which cost a mere 48p (Draper later admitted Virgin lost 2p on every copy sold). The biggest response was for *Tubular Bells*, which was performed live at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on June 25, with a stage-wary Oldfield joined by Stanshall, Steve Hillage, Mick Taylor and members of Henry Cow.

After entering the Top 40 albums charts in July 1973, *Tubular Bells* reached Number 1 in October '74, eventually clocking up more than five years in the Top 75. In December 1973, *Tubular Bells Part One* was used as the theme to satanic mega-hit *The Exorcist*; in March '74 the album hit US Number 3, while an edit of the song helpfully highlighted as *The Original Theme To 'The Exorcist'* reached Number 7. Yet Oldfield refused to tour or be interviewed, and retired to rural Herefordshire to plan 1974's *Hergest Ridge*.

Virgin Records would go on to huge success, with signings including Tangerine Dream, the Sex Pistols, Janet Jackson and Peter Gabriel, before Branson sold up in 1992. There would, however, be financial issues between the men who established it, and Oldfield admits that 48 minutes into his 1990 LP *Amarok* a Morse code sequence spells out "Fuck Off RB". But their friendship, like *Tubular Bells*, endures. Over the years, Oldfield's made three sequels, re-recorded it, remixed it with dance beats and played it at the opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012. "People ask, 'why did you write *Tubular Bells*?'" he mused in 2014. "And I don't know why – I didn't do it for a reason."

Ian Harrison



Panic in Aberdeen: Bowie, unstoppable socks machine.

## Aladdin Sane at Number 1

**MAY 5** David Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* enters the UK charts at Number 1 and stays there all month. On May 8 its creator goes to see Peter Cook and Dudley Moore's show *Behind The Fridge* at the Cambridge Theatre in Covent Garden. On May 12 he begins a UK tour at Earls Court, where the future Sid Vicious attends. With nine costume changes a night, the tour reaches Aberdeen Music Hall on May 16, where Bowie tells Disc he's bought some grey Yves St Laurent socks: "I went in a Rolls-Royce... apart from that, I don't think I've done anything decadent in the last six months." That month, The Guess Who release *Glamour Boy*, an anti-glam song in an anti-Bowie sleeve.



Stirring it up: The Wailers (from second left) Peter Tosh, Bob Marley, Bunny Livingstone, on the OGWT.

## THE WAILERS HIT THE UK

**MAY 1** The Wailers appear on BBC2's *Old Grey Whistle Test*, playing *Concrete Jungle* and *Stir It Up* from April's LP *Catch A Fire*. On the same day the group record a live session for John Peel's *Top Gear* show, which is broadcast on May 15. They began their first full UK tour on April 27 in Nottingham and play 26 dates in all (includ-

ing a May 24 Paris Theatre show broadcast on BBC radio in June) before finishing at the Southampton Coach House on May 29. The group are pleased with the crowd responses, but have never encountered the concept of encores before. Afterwards they begin work on their next long-player, *Burnin'*, at Island Studios in Notting Hill.

### ALSO ON!



**YELLOW FEVER**  
5 Sentimental jailhouse jingle *Tie A Yellow Ribbon* Round The Ole Oak Tree by Dawn Featuring Tony Orlando (above) is Number 1 in Britain and the US. It also tops charts in Canada, Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium and South Africa.

**RAW DEAL**  
5 Released In February, Iggy And The Stooges' *Raw Power* reaches US Number 182. Around this time, manager Tony Defries advises Iggy to forget the band and play *Peter Pan* on Broadway.

**NIXON IT UP**  
17 The Senate Watergate Committee begins its televised hearings into President Nixon's conduct. Topical records include *The Waves*' At The Watergate (The Truth Come Pourin' Out), *Fred Wesley & The J.B.s*' *Rockin' Funky Watergate* and *Dickie Goodman*'s *Watergate*.

**FLOYDIAN TRIP**  
18 *Pink Floyd* play the first of two sold-out dates at Earls Court. They unveil a model plane that crashes and burns at the climax of *On The Run*. Profits to go Shelter.

**MATERIAL ISSUE**  
30 George Harrison's fourth solo LP *Living In The Material World* is released. *Wings*' *Red Rose Speedway* was released earlier in the month on May 4, promoted by a 15-date UK tour with support band *Brinsley Schwarz*.

### TOP TEN

#### SAO PAULO (BRAZIL) MAY 5

1 YOU'RE A LADY PETER SKELLERN LONDON

2 LISTEN TO THE MUSIC THE DOOBIE BROTHERS WARNER BROS

3 WHY CAN'T WE LIVE TOGETHER TIMMY THOMAS TOP TAPE

4 YOU ARE THE SUNSHINE OF MY LIFE STEVIE WONDER TAMLA MOTOWN

5 AMOR, AMOR, AMOR MARCOS ROBERTO CONTINENTAL

6 DOMINGO FELIZ ANGELO MAXIMO BEVERLY

7 CROCODILE ROCK ELTON JOHN FERMATA

8 SO LUCKY FREDDIE DAVIS CHANTECLER

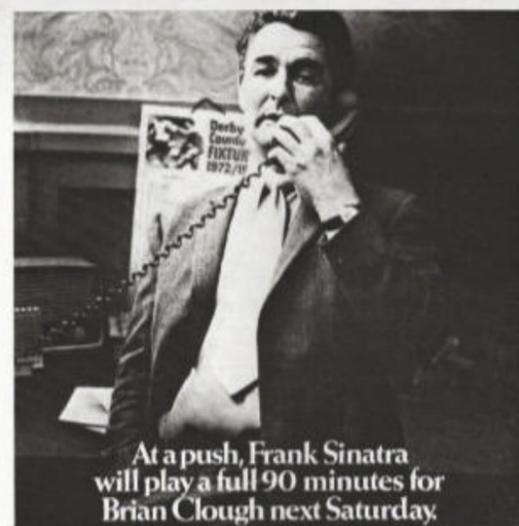
9 I'D LOVE YOU TO WANT ME LOBO PHILIPS

10 O MENINO DA GAITA (EL CHICO DE LA ARMONICA) SERGIO REIS RCA VICTOR



From Bury to Brazil, in brown: Skellern at 1.

### AD ARCHIVE 1973



As long as he remembers to push a button into the Radiomobile stereo in his new Morris... And he will be ready that whether Derby County win or lose the week-long voice of Francis Albert always manages to relax his tension... Of course he could always turn on his Radiomobile car radio instead... But here's how you get a full 90 minutes of Sinatra's And as Brian Clough says: 'When I want to hear My Way I want to hear it on my... Why Radiomobile? Well because Radiomobile offers you the... Grand convenience of standard equipment but then Brian Clough never has been known to leaving in somebody else's broken-down... Radiomobile has the... Specialising in Radiomobile stereo. Model Numbered No. 8225 Stereo 8. It's with optional perched speaker impedance. Fully supplied with 12 inch speaker, earth, positive earth available. Complete with two speakers. Price £18.40!... Radiomobile Stereo... THE STEREO HILLS-ROUCE FIVE

Derby County manager Brian Clough, who will one day smash Vinnie Jones' ghetto blaster, suggests a tape deck for your Morris Marina.



# Whose first LPs were live ones?

Let us answer your music questions, solve rock's nagging enigmas and illuminate pop's murky corners.

**Five Live Yardbirds and the MC5's Kick Out The Jams are both debut albums and live recordings. I can't think of any more but there must be loads. Can you help??**

*Dr EJ Robinson, via e-mail*

**MOJO says:** Live albums which capture their subjects raw need an audience, so let's discount live-in-the-studio debuts like *Please Please Me*. A quick selection of in-concert first forays on wax includes: Tom Rush's *Live At The Unicorn* (1962), Georgie Fame's *Rhythm And Blues At The Flamingo* (1963), John Mayall *Plays John Mayall* (1965), The Blues Project's *Live At The Café Au Go Go* (1966)... so yes, loads. Other significant examples include Hot Tuna's first album (1970), Jeff Buckley's 25-minute EP *Live at Sin-é* (1993), *Suck On This* by Primus (1989) and Hüsker Dü's paint-stripping *Land Speed Record* (1982). It should also be noted that Jane's Addiction's 1987 debut was recorded at the Roxy in Los Angeles, but extras were added in the studio and applause came courtesy of a Los Lobos gig, leading us back to the knotty question of "bashing it out and tarding it up later" as Nick Lowe has it. Incidentally, *Kick Out The Jams* engineer Bruce Botnick recalled that as well as recording two MC5 Detroit Grande Ballroom gigs, the producers recorded the band's set sans audience the following day, so they had more premium takes to choose from for the record. Sounds like a box set of all the performances is in order?

**WHOSE COCAINE SONG?**  
I remember once hearing a rough blues song in a record shop in Denmark, which was a version of the Reverend Gary Davis's *Cocaine Blues* which

seemed to have jokes and laughter added. Any ideas who it was?

*Gary Brophy, via e-mail*

**MOJO says:** This sounds like *Cocaine* by Abner Jay, which appears alongside *I'm So Depressed*, *Wee Wee*, *I Wanna Job* and *Vietnam* on his 1968 album *Terrible Comedy Blues*, which includes gags and moralistic speech between tunes. Georgia-born Jay released eight albums and described himself as a "Philosopher, Lecturer, Composer, Singer and ONE MAN BAND... the first of the original black musicians... the originals are dead, and he is half dead." Jay checked out in 1993 at the age of 72.

## WHEN DID THE PALM COURT SOUND COME BACK?

When did the '30s come back in pop and rock? I'm moved to ask after listening to Vangelis's 1980 song *Not A Bit Of It - All Of It*, but I know it was much earlier than that.

*Martin Price, via e-mail*

**Fred Dellar says:** Let's start with post-war throwback musicals like *The Boy Friend* and *Salad Days*, and Noël Coward's sensational 1955 Las Vegas residency and live album. The world of pop was impressed, and so vintage jazz enthusiasts The Temperance Seven hit Number 1 with their take on 1930 tune *You're Driving Me Crazy* in 1961, followed by other comedic releases from the early Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, Bob Kerr's *Whoopee*

Band and The New Vaudeville Band. The cat was out of the bag: in the later '60s John Arthy formed the Pasadena Roof Orchestra, Tiny Tim broke through in '68 singing in the style of early '30s heart-throb Rudy Vallee, and later suave Bryan Ferry's Gatsby-era persona had pop hits with covers of *These Foolish Things* and *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes* in 1973 and '74.



Mad Dogs and Englishmen: (clockwise from left) paint-strippers Hüsker Dü take a breather; Noël Coward and Gertrude Lawrence (right) smooch at the 88s; Abner Jay's *Terrible Comedy Blues*; stinky GG Allin scorns audiophilia.

The zenith, arguably, was reached in 1998 when Neil Tennant gathered Ferry, Paul McCartney, Elton John, Marianne Faithfull and others to create *Twentieth Century Blues*, a tribute album featuring songs penned by Coward.

## WHICH SOUNDS WERE THE WORST?

(Re: 'What are the worst-sounding commercially released albums?', MOJO 329) I am reminded of playing for the first, and only time, the live album by Dirt - *Never Mind Dirt - Here's The Bollocks*, a 1982 LP release on Crass Records, retailing at a tempting £2. Dreadful!!!

*Dil Longstaff, Reading*

Illinois' powerpop mavericks Shoes self-recorded their eventual debut *Black Vinyl Shoes* at home on a 4-track. The production - or lack thereof - is startling, though in a way it adds a bit of endearing magic. The songs themselves are all winners.

*Sander Varusk, via e-mail*

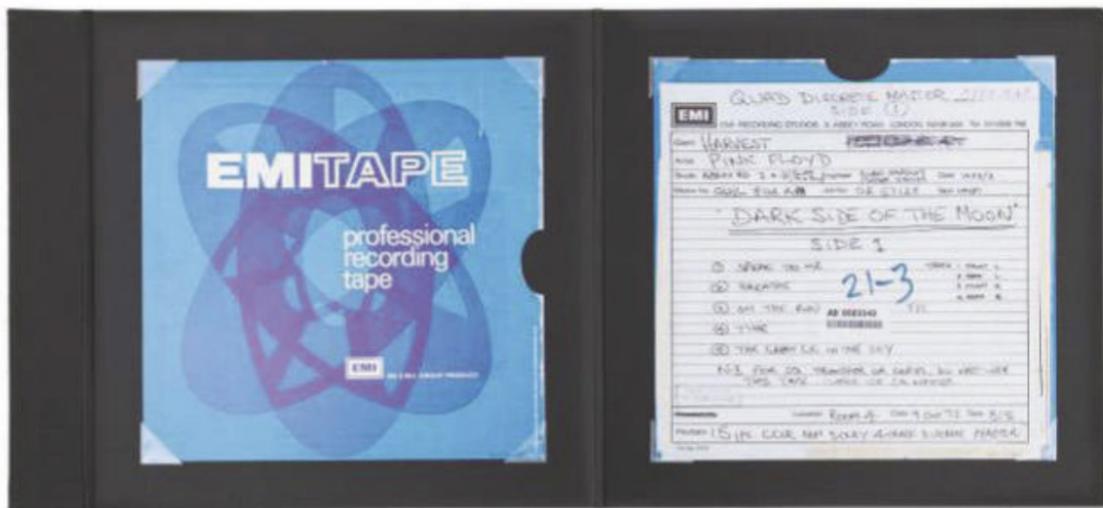
**MOJO says:** Thanks for the suggestions of other bum-quality releases: certain '80s Trax Records pressings made using recycled vinyl (labels and all), Andrew White's 1972 LP *Live In Bucharest* (one critic said it sounded "so bad the cymbals often sound like garbage can lids") and GG Allin's 1988 *Freaks, Faggots, Drunks & Junkies*, which is meant to sound terrible.

## ERRATUM

Thanks to all readers who noted the unfortunate error in issue 329's Ask MOJO - of course Mick Ronson didn't play on *All The Young Dudes*. We apologise unreservedly for the error.

## CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail [askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk) and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.



# Grooving With A Pict(ure)

Win! A print of *The Dark Side Of The Moon's* legendary tape box, plus more DSOM Floyd (and Abbey Road) swag.

OF THE classic albums recorded at Abbey Road Studios, Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* is one of the mightiest. Now, the album's rarely seen side one master tape has been brought out of the archive and turned into a limited edition of 250 replica prints. The EMI Tape Box Folio – Side One is lovingly handmade to its original dimensions and comes with a booklet and certificate of authenticity.

We have one (see top), worth £200, to give away as this month's crossword prize! There's also more covetable *Dark Side Of The Moon* merchandise, including a Heart Beat Cashmere Scarf, a Fleece Blanket, a Flight

Bag and a Hip Flask Set, and such tasty Abbey Road items as branded drumsticks, plectrums, a handsome notebook, and more! Plus! A vinyl copy of the new Floyd 1990 long-player *Live At Knebworth* (above, right). In all, the haul is worth more than £600.

So pitch the grey cells against Swing, Swang, Swingin' Fred Dellar's crossword. Fill in and send a scan of it to [mojo@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mojo@bauermedia.co.uk), making sure to type CROSSWORD 331 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered.

Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date for entries is **June 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see [www.mojo4music.com](http://www.mojo4music.com)

<https://shop.abbeyroad.com>



## ANSWERS

### MOJO 329

**Across:** 1 Shane MacGowan, 9 No More To The Dance, 10 Bon Iver, 12 Tom Rush, 13 Sine, 16 Love, 18 Let's Dance, 19 Renegade, 21 Mud, 24 Meg, 25 Area, 26 Nature Boy, 29 Beat Dis, 30 Ian, 31/32 Jim Morrison, 36 Reedy, 38 Eddie, 39 Boomtown Rats, 41 Surf's Up, 42 Moist, 43 Bambi, 44 Lori, 46 Raga, 47 Johnson, 49 Doug, 50 Don't Lie, 51 Stay, 52 Down So Low, 55 Sami, 56 EMI, 57 Into, 58 Usher, 59 Aim, 60 Saxon, 61 Garland.

**Down:** 1 Sandie Shaw, 2 Aimee Mann, 3 Eire, 4 Action, 5 Guthrie, 6/45 When She Was My Girl, 7 Cheese, 8 In Too Deep, 11 One Grain Of Sand, 14 Neu, 15 Scat, 16 Lamb, 17 Vega, 20 N-Joi, 21 Midgets, 22 Dusty Springfield, 23 Iris, 27 Arrow, 28 Yardbirds, 33 I'm Real, 34 Nesmith, 35 Western Swing, 36 Rare, 37 I'm Coming Out, 40 Old Gold, 43 Breeders, 44 Lady Soul, 47 Jawbox, 48 Naomi, 53 Sean, 54 Limo.

**Winner: Mick Reeves** of Prescot wins an Astell&Kern SR25 portable digital audio player.

### ACROSS

- 1 See photoclue A (4,4)
- 5 How James Brown claimed ownership (1,3,3)
- 10 The Verve's only Number 1 single (3,5,4,4)
- 12 The Moody Blues covered this Bessie Banks classic (2,3)
- 14 ----- and The Brown Ale Cowboys (Mike Harding) (7,9)
- 17 Laurie Anderson's were Strange (6)
- 18 Band whose breakthrough album was *The Grand Illusion* (1977) (4)
- 20 ----- Sprout (6)
- 22 Freeez's biggest hit (1.1.1.)
- 23 Film that linked The Monkees and Jack Nicholson (4)
- 25 Finally, a hit for Etta James (2,4)
- 27 It went Top 5 for Placebo (5,3)
- 30 It was Johnny Ray's blubbering hit (3)
- 32 See photoclue B (4)
- 34 The Hollies delivered this confirmation (3,1,4)
- 35 See 7 Down
- 36 Charlie Harper's punk heroes (1.1.4)
- 37 Scorpio Rising film director Kenneth (5)
- 38 He was once part of 10cc (3,5)
- 40 Tommy Roe sang her praises (6)
- 41 Band formed by Jay Farrar after the break-up of Uncle Tupelo (3,4)
- 43 Carole King's lyrical '70s label (3)
- 45 It was little and read by Love (3,4)
- 46 The Cure's first pop chart single (1,6)
- 47 Iggy and The ----- (7)
- 48 It was The Doors' last album with Jim Morrison as front man (1.1.5)
- 50 ---- Silver Lining (Jeff Beck) (2,2)
- 51 Back In The ---- (The Beatles) (1.1.1.1)
- 52 Initially, The Sound Of Philadelphia (1.1.1.1.)
- 57 Country music icon Tex (6)
- 58 ----- Tentacles (5)
- 59 She was formerly a member of The New Pornographers (4,4)
- 60 British folk band whose name is Orcadian for natural light (3)
- 61 Not an album or EP (6)
- 62 A nine-piece band (5)
- 63 Dear ----- (Roy Wood) (6)
- 64 White Stripes drummer Ms White (3)

### DOWN

- 1 His last album was *L-O-V-E* in 1965 (3,4)
- 2 Her first release was Ringo, I Love You (4)
- 3 Tim Buckley album named after a Spanish poet (5)
- 4 It's a Mavis Staples album (2,3,2)
- 6 He was The Byrds' drummer and multi-instrumentalist (4,7)
- 7/35 Leonard Cohen's melodic construction (5,2,4)
- 8 Skip Spence's only studio album (3)
- 9 Just Like ----- (Heinz) (5)
- 11 They're Black and come from Akron (4)
- 13 See photoclue C (7,7)
- 15 The Bee Gees' light bulb moment (4)
- 16 A question posed by World Party (2,2,4,5)
- 18 Rising ---- (Doc Watson) (3,5)
- 19 Swindon's greatest, surely? (1.1.1)
- 21 Martin Fry's alphabetical hit-makers (1.1.1.)
- 23 Siouxsie And The Banshees opened this album with Dazzle (6)
- 24 Hardcore punk band from Vancouver (1.1.1)
- 26 UB40's Campbell (3)
- 28 Could be Willie, could be Rick (6)
- 29 Folkie Glenn, once of The Limelites (9)
- 31 U2's tribute to Billie Holiday (5,2,6)
- 33 David Gates was their lead singer (5)
- 37 Gong's Daevid (5)
- 39 That Hi-Di-Ho Calloway (3)
- 40 *Pretty Much Your Standard Ranch* ----- (Mike Nesmith) (5)
- 42 Billy Preston's astronomical instrumental (4-5)
- 43 Award-winning British-based bluesman, born in the Lebanon (4,5)
- 44 Did The Fall break free with this album? (9)
- 49 Coloured like Al Stewart's fourth album (6)
- 53 DJ Shadow's was Private (5)
- 54 Ouch! Gordon Sumner? (5)
- 55 Roy, Neil, Steve maybe? (5)
- 56 Junglist Mr Size – or a Bobby Brown release (4)

Getty (3)



Gingham Style: Mick Talbot (left) and Paul Weller, in tribute to the *Brideshead Revisited* TV show, on the Cambridge video shoot for August '83 *45 Long Hot Summer*.



## Mick Talbot and The Style Council

After *The Jam*, there were no rules. But embroilments and domino effects ended it.

### HELLO AUGUST 1982

Paul had just come back off holiday in Italy and asked me to meet him in the West End. He said, "I've got a new project," and I didn't know if he meant a one-off or a band or what.

I think the meeting went on for much longer than either of us expected. If you look at the cover of [1985 Style Council album] *Our Favourite Shop*, that panorama of influences, a lot of that was in that chat we had in '82. We were getting deep into Nell Dunn novels, and Ken Loach's adaptations of them. We talked about Tony Hancock and George Orwell. I think I brought up George Bernard Shaw!

It was more about your ethos to life than how you played the piano.

Our backgrounds were similar: suburban working-class from the south side of London. Paul was only four months older than me. In the slang of my area at the time we would both have been 'peanuts' – people who were a bit too young to be proper suedeheads.

We did two or three days recording very early in January 1983. It was just me, Paul and Zeke Manyika, the Orange Juice drummer. And we got three singles out of it: *Money-Go-Round*, *Speak Like A Child* and *A Solid Bond In Your Heart*, and the B-sides. It all clicked. And the lack of rules or doctrine was really refreshing.

The Jam thing? I don't think that could be ignored. There was an element that

was very disenchanted that they had split up. One of our first shows was a Youth CND thing at Brockwell Park. There was only one way in, I seem to recall, and there were a few people banging on the windows of our minibus. A few people screaming. A few people crying. It was almost a religious thing.

### GOODBYE MARCH 1990

The beginning of the end? I suppose we kind of lost a lot of people with *The Cost Of Loving* [1987]. We knew we could have done another *Our Favourite Shop*, but it wasn't what we'd done. We'd never made the same record twice.

My take on it is that we got too embroiled in changing our production, rather than the quality of the songs. We were trying to embrace contemporary soul, and maybe it didn't suit us. But don't forget that *Long Hot Summer* had some of that too.

When we did *Confessions Of A Pop Group* [1988], we believed in it. We thought we'd done a pretty good job. But there's always a domino effect and we suffered on the back of the one before. Then we did *Modernism: A New Decade*, and that was when we had a chat and went, I think this will be our last album. But of course it never came out. The new guy at Polydor said, "This doesn't sound like a Style Council album!" But that was the whole point. None of them did.

The Royal Albert Hall show in 1989 is the famous show where fans apparently ripped up their programmes, but I sometimes wonder if a couple of those shows haven't been combined in the mythology. Because there was a bit of unrest at

the 1987 Albert Hall show too, when we screened our strange little film, *Jerusalem*. I mean, which one was our Judas gig?

Our last show was a benefit in February 1990, then I think there was a press release in March 1990 saying we'd knocked it on the head. But it didn't feel like a brutal snap, because we were all really busy at [Weller's] *Solid Bond Studios*, with Dee C Lee's album [*Free Your Feelings*] and the Young Disciples and lots more besides. And then Paul got his solo deal and we did *Strange Museum* together on that. And I was on the next two solo albums.

When we did the Style Council documentary [*Long Hot Summers*], it was Paul's idea that the four of us – me, him, Dee and [drummer] Steve White – played *A Very Deep Sea* [from *Confessions...*], it felt like a fitting end to the film. When it aired [on Sky Arts, in December 2020], all our phones went mad. It really touched a lot of people. And that's all it's about in the end.

Danny Eccleston



"I mean, which one was our Judas gig?"

MICK TALBOT



Changing moods: TSC at the Albert Hall, July '89; (inset) Talbot today.

**Lennon & McCartney.**  
**MOJO's finest writers. The full story.**  
**In two deluxe volumes.**



**AVAILABLE NOW!**

Buy online at [greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo-specials](http://greatmagazines.co.uk/mojo-specials) Part 2 out May 6, 2021

